



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT ON THE CNCS STRATEGIC PLAN

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 





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Summary of Public Input on the CNCS Strategic Plan

October 19, 2010

Prepared for
Strategy Office
Corporation for National and
Community Service

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INTRODUCTION

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) asked Abt Associates to analyze the public input that was received for the Strategic Plan. The goal of this project was to produce a document for the public that summarizes the public outreach process and the comments received.

Background

Every five years, Congress requests each federal agency to adopt a strategic plan that defines its missions, goals, and the means by which it will measure its progress. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA) was signed

into law in 2009, and fulfilling the promise of SAA has been the top priority of CNCS. SAA has helped to shape the agency’s strategic plan for the next 5 years. CNCS aligned the priorities of its strategic plan around the six impact areas outlined in SAA (disaster services, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, opportunity, and veterans), and these areas were the main focus of discussions as CNCS solicited input from the public. Specifically, stakeholders were asked to respond to draft Key Objectives that were developed by CNCS in each impact area:

Focus Areas as Outlined in SAA	Proposed Key Objectives¹
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase graduation rates •Increase grade-level performance
<i>Healthy Futures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce obesity rates •Improve quality of life for older Americans
<i>Clean Energy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce energy consumption
<i>Veterans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase economic opportunity for veterans and military families
<i>Opportunity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase employment for unemployed or underemployed economically vulnerable people •Increase financial stability of economically vulnerable families and individuals •Increase the number of economically vulnerable families and individuals living in safe, affordable housing
<i>Disaster Preparedness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase capacity of at-risk/vulnerable communities to serve citizens in the event of a disaster •Improve communities in disaster-affected areas

¹Note that these Key Objectives were refined throughout the summer of 2010 and this chart reflects the initial objectives proposed by CNCS.

At the end of June 2010, CNCS released a two-page document that summarized the direction of its strategic plan. In addition, a presentation was posted on the CNCS website to provide additional insight. CNCS took the solicitation of public comments very seriously and took many measures to ensure that the public had ample opportunity to provide input on the strategic plan. There were a myriad of ways in which individuals and/or organizations could submit comments:

Webinars by focus areas

CNCS conducted seven webinars – one for each focus area, and an extra one for education due to the limited notice that was given for the first webinar on this topic.

Webinars for specific audiences

CNCS conducted several webinars for various audiences – state commissions, AmeriCorps National Directs, CNCS’ Corporate Foundation Partners & Friends, Tribal Leaders, and the general foundation community.

Comments submitted via the CNCS website:

www.nationalservice.gov

Over 125 comments were submitted for specific focus areas via CNCS’ Community Dialogue webpage.

Comments submitted via email:

strategy@cns.gov

Over 50 email comments were submitted.

Face-to-face Community Dialogues

As of August 30, 2010, eighteen face-to-face “Community Dialogues” were held in locations throughout the country. These were largely based on pre-existing travel arrangements² for CNCS’ President & CEO and board members:

New York City, New York
Vicksburg, Mississippi
San Antonio, Texas
Hamilton, Ohio
Frankfort, Kentucky
Memphis, Tennessee
Los Angeles, California
San Bernadino, California
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Indianapolis, Indiana
Rochester, New York
Cheyenne, Wyoming
Augusta, Georgia
Detroit, Michigan
Flint, Michigan
Montana
New Orleans, Louisiana
Topeka, Kansas

A Community Dialogue is a facilitated, dynamic conversation designed to gather input on CNCS’ 5-year strategic plan. As CNCS strives to engage a broader network of stakeholders, invitations to attend the Dialogues were extended to organizations that have not previously had a relationship with the agency. The Dialogues were designed to promote an in-depth conversation and a two-way exchange of information, and thus, the format required a

² Whenever possible, Community Dialogues were limited to local travel for board members.

limit to the number of participants.

This report

This document summarizes public comments received through August 30, 2010. The report begins with a summary of themes across all focus areas. The remainder of the report is organized by focus area, with an appendix that summarizes each face-to-face dialogue separately. The data come from notes that JBS International (facilitator of face-to-face Community Dialogues) sent to Abt Associates and uploaded to the strategic plan website, as well as additional comments submitted directly to the website. Abt Associates used NVivo analytic software to code the notes.

The analysis for each focus area is organized into the following categories:

- Themes related to what success looks like
- Themes related to the proposed key objectives
- Themes related to programming directions service can take to meet key objectives
- Themes related to the challenges and opportunities

These summaries include the most common themes that participants mentioned in each of the categories. The report reflects the breadth of public comments that were raised by a wide variety of stakeholders all around the country.

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THEMES ACROSS FOCUS AREAS

In addition to themes that emerged within each of the six focus areas, there were themes that emerged across the focus areas as well. These themes, nine in total, represent a broad consensus among the participants in the public input process about the Corporation's strategic plan and the opportunities and challenges for service.

Partnerships and collaboration

One important theme across focus areas was the opportunity to encourage partnerships and collaborations in the pursuit of the key objectives. Participants saw opportunities both for collaborations between different CNCS programs and between CNCS programs and outside partners. Collaborations between CNCS programs present opportunities to incorporate diverse groups, with their diverse skills and talents, into service-based solutions, such as when Senior Corps members connect with AmeriCorps programs to provide tutoring to students. Collaborations between CNCS and outside partners would involve not only state and federal agencies and national non-profits, but also local governments, churches, and community-based organizations. These collaborations were regarded by participants as critical to ensuring that CNCS programming utilizes the existing resources and knowledge base of these assorted organizations, does not needlessly duplicate the efforts of others, and mitigates the effects of various organizations

working in silos.

Raise public awareness through service

An additional theme that emerged across the six focus areas was the opportunity to use service as a way to raise awareness and educate the public about the issues represented by CNCS's key objectives. At a broad level, service members can help get the word out about the need to, for example, help a community's veterans transition to civilian employment or have a community disaster response plan. At a narrower level, service members could help draw public attention to services and resources that already exist but may not be well known. Furthermore, service members could conduct an awareness campaign about specific, simple measures that can be taken to reduce childhood obesity or make a home more energy efficient.

Skill development

Participants also saw opportunities to utilize service as a means to build the skill development and workforce readiness of those engaged in service. Citing the current state of the job market, participants saw opportunities to use service to better prepare high school students to enter the workforce, connect veterans returning to civilian life with job opportunities, and build a green economy workforce through efforts to promote clean energy. Furthermore, community workforce development assess-

ments could be conducted to better align skill development needs with programming related to CNCS's key objectives.

Benefits to those who serve

Another theme across the focus areas was the benefits to service members and volunteers who engage in service. Participants regard service not only as a way to achieve CNCS's key objectives, but also as a way to positively impact the lives of those engaged in service. Service may lead participating individuals to realize positive impacts such as building skills and talents, better engagement in their communities, and a sense of accomplishment in tackling complex, pressing problems. Participants stressed that those who are traditionally on the receiving end of service, such as youth and members of impoverished communities, gain tremendously from themselves becoming providers of service to others.

Engaging new populations in service

Participants noted both opportunities and challenges related to engaging underrepresented groups in service. As noted above, introducing a diverse range of new participants to service expands the number of members who can gain the benefits provided by service. CNCS also benefits by having a broader pool of talents and skills to draw upon, and communities benefit when those most familiar with a local community's needs are engaged in providing needed services. Participants saw opportunities to incorporate into service those groups currently underrepresented, such as at-risk

youth, immigrants, the disabled, rural residents, and veterans. Nevertheless, participants also noted challenges associated with including these groups in service, especially as relates to initially reaching them, navigating cultural and language barriers, gaining their commitment to serve, and overcoming logistical barriers such as child care and transportation needs.

Measuring success

A general theme that emerged across the focus areas was problems related to measuring success. Participants noted that the three year grant cycle is a short timeframe in which to see dramatic changes for problems as complex as those addressed by the Corporation's strategic plan. Furthermore, participants raised concerns about whether or not success, even when it is observed, can be directly attributed to the work of CNCS. Another common concern was the difficulty determining which metrics would be used to gauge successful outcomes.

Turf battles

An additional theme that emerged was the challenge of turf battles or siloed service provision. As noted above, participants believe strongly in the importance of utilizing partnerships and collaborations to achieve service objectives. However, turf battles are seen as threatening the willingness of parties to work together. Similarly, breaking down silos of service is seen as a challenge that must be overcome to fully realize the promise of collaboration.

Local needs

Another theme across focus areas was the challenge of incorporating broad, national service objectives with the diverse needs and resources of local communities. Participants noted, for example, that rural and urban communities may have completely different needs in their schools, and that certain areas are far more disaster prone than others. Successful service programs will need to be flexible enough to adapt to these local differences.

Expanding the key objectives

A final common theme was that the Corporation's key objectives are too narrow. While participants were in general agreement that the proposed key objectives are important ones, many felt they are not comprehensive or inclusive enough. For example, participants wanted safety and mental health support included as objectives within the healthy futures focus area, land preservation included in the clean energy focus area, and an emphasis on service-learning within the education focus area. The absence of such additional objectives was regarded as potentially limiting not only the type of service programming offered, but also the number of people and communities benefiting from, engaging in, or being recipients of service.

FOCUS AREA: EDUCATION

Below is a summary of the comments for the Education focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Education webinars held on July 13, 2010 and August 19, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Opportunities for service

Participants were asked what success would look like in five years under the framework of service as a solution. The most common responses related to efforts to engage students in service and implement service-learning curricula in schools. One participant wanted to see service-learning “implemented across school districts, not just in particular classrooms.” Another participant described success as “every student, in every school, [having] a concrete opportunity to combine academic learning objectives with meaningful service-learning every year.” A participant wanted to see a high school “service corps of volunteers,” while another viewed success as including student service as a graduation requirement.

Academic achievement and attainment

Academic achievement was also seen as a key measure of success, with a wide range of participants expressing the goals of increasing graduation rates and grade-level performance.

Participants described success as students “reading well by the end of the third grade,” and “increased performance in literacy, math and science.” Several participants envisioned success as achievement gains among early-childhood youth, while others emphasized improved outcomes for secondary and post-secondary students. Some participants want to see “a decrease in the number of students who drop out of high school and an increase in the number of students enrolling in 4-year univer-



sities,” and an “increase in graduation rates among all demographics.” In one city, success was seen as youth viewing education as important and ultimately having a better prepared workforce. One participant described success as an increase to an 85 percent high school graduation rate and a 65 percent college graduation rate; for another, success was defined as a 90 percent passage rate on the NAEP. One participant felt that success was raising “student achievement and engagement in school [as it] becomes a pathway to college and career readi-

ness, rather than [focusing] solely on drop-out rates.”

A number of comments expressed the importance of including college and/or career preparedness in measures of success. One participant felt that success was “encouraging students to pursue post graduate work through college or vocational preparation to be economically self sufficient.” Another suggested that success includes “students [who] are prepared for college, technical training, job skills, and military service.” One participant felt that “An increase in educational attainment should also be measured by increasing the number of students who go on to post secondary education.”

“Mentoring done well can engage large numbers of volunteers in a service that has a high impact on both the child (mentee) and adult (mentor).”

Participant in Indianapolis, IN

Mentoring and tutoring

Mentoring and tutoring were also seen as key components of success within the education focus area. According to one participant, “success looks like every student who can benefit from mentoring or tutoring having access to that.” Participants felt that senior citizens and college students could provide tutoring to young students, along with peer-to-peer tutoring among middle school and high school students.

Family and community involvement

Participants see family and community involvement as key indicators for success. Participants expressed the need to acknowledge that “success in high school is not limited to the school setting but includes support networks for family, students - such as adequate housing, food, income.” Success includes “more parents attending PTA and other school functions” and “educating parents on ways they can support their child’s [education].” For one participant, success would mean “community members of all ages – including Boomers and older / retired citizens –[being] engaged in connecting students’ learning with the real world, to help them succeed in school and transition to post-secondary options.” For another, success is envisioned as “schools being recognized as community centers that support entire families bringing resources that ensure students have the educational and community support necessary.” Participants also see success measured by the number of volunteers involved, the number of organizations that have completed

a “volunteer management program,” and the “number of positive adults committed to school-age children.” Success for some participants would include the community feeling like “their needs and voices were being heard” and an increase in the financial well-being of families, while other participants noted the importance of schools serving as community centers.

Partnerships and collaboration

Participants also considered partnerships and collaborations as components of success. Participants saw roles for CNCS programs, school systems, government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education, non-profits, and the business community in achieving success.

Incorporating underrepresented populations in service

Success also includes supporting youth development efforts and engaging traditionally under-served populations. Participants felt that youth development can promote a number of positive outcomes, including “academic improvement [and] increased social skills.” Participants see success as including a diverse range of population groups to target for education support services, including low-income students, at-risk youth, ESL students, minorities, and teen mothers. A webinar participant stated that “any solution will entail a combination of expanded opportunities for young people to serve and be actively engaged in their schools and communities as well as targeted, direct services to support students who need

special services to get on grade level and graduate on time.” Such efforts are seen as critical to achieving another component of success articulated by participants – that of reducing achievement gaps between groups of students.

As part of the discussion of what success looks like, participants were asked what groups should be targeted to participate in providing service. Participants expressed a desire to involve youth who are not currently in school, home-schooled youth, senior citizens, refugee and immigrant communities, the disabled, businesses and their employees, and the unemployed.

Capacity building

Participants suggested an array of approaches and tools to build the capacity of individuals and organizations to solve problems related to the education focus area. Training is seen as important, as is collaboration among parties to maximize their efficiency solving problems. In one city, participants saw a need for “more funding toward capacity building and not just programs.” One participant wants to “create a process for [a] local community to be successful in the grant process,” while in another city a tool for capacity building would be to “allow matching dollars to be available between CNCS and other federal agencies.”

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

Increasing graduation rates and grade-level performance

Participants who discussed the key objectives of increasing graduation rates and increasing grade-level performance found them to be laudable goals. However, many saw room for improving the objectives or the addition of other objectives.

Other objectives

Several participants saw the objectives as too narrowly tailored, which could result in an emphasis on “the short-term numbers rather than the long-term,” as one participant suggested. Another participant commented that a narrow focus “does not allow us to address what is truly effecting us locally. For instance the urban areas may have very different challenges from rural schools.” A participant suggested that the emphasis on graduation rates could detract from other important goals related to “college admission, job attainment, [and] civic participation.”

Other participants expressed a desire to see the key objectives expanded. Some participants wanted early childhood and adult education included, and others wanted to see kindergarten readiness included and a focus on “a more specific and important goal [of] third graders reading at third grade level by the end of the third grade.” Still others, while not opposed

to the key objectives, thought a five year time frame is an unrealistically short time in which to achieve success.

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

During the course of the discussions, participants raised comments about programming directions for CNCS related to the education focus area. Responses included programming directions that support the key objectives of increasing graduation rates and increasing grade-level performance, as well as those that are related to promoting education but less clearly connected to the key objectives.

Participants want to see CNCS focus on a range of programming to directly support improved academic progress and outcomes. Specifically, participants want to see “high school dropout prevention strategies” and “CNCS and the U.S. Department of Education [working] together to use service-learning as an instructional method to reduce the dropout rate and to deliver high quality instruction.” Other participants feel that a focus on early childhood academic progress is critical, including a “focus on third graders reading at grade level” and “making sure children learn to read and love reading.” Accomplishing these objectives could

be achieved through a programming focus on mentoring and tutoring. One participant noted that “cross-age peer mentoring, multi-generational teams, and older adults as trained tutors are all proven strategies.” Another suggested “giving every student multiple opportunities in grade K-12 to tutor and otherwise assist younger students.” Still another recommended the involvement of “AmeriCorps members and VISTA members...in supporting volunteer recruitment for school based mentoring.”

Participants across the discussions supported the implementation of service opportunities in schools, especially the inclusion of service-learning programming to “reach disengaged students who do not thrive or learn in traditional ways.” National service members are seen as being potentially “trained [in] how to support academic service-learning...Their role is to help the teacher implement their curriculum based project.”

Participants mentioned other programming directions for CNCS including the creation of a database of effective service-learning projects, the recruitment of AmeriCorps alumni for teaching in rural areas, and financial literacy training to mitigate the effects of student debt on graduation rates.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

Participants were asked what challenges CNCS would face and need to address in the education focus area. A key challenge is how to measure success or impact. Participants noted that “graduation rates are hard to change in five years” and wondered “how do we know if [CNCS programming is] improving graduation rates?” Other comments alluded to the difficulties of finding an agreed-upon metric to gauge academic improvement and gaining access to private student data.

For many participants, incorporating service and service-learning in schools presents a challenge. One participant felt that the primary challenge is “to help schools (administrators and staff) understand and appreciate the ethic of service and its impact.” Schools may face “practical, financial and logistical” barriers to implementing service. To minimize the costs of implementing service in schools, “service solutions need to add a layer of help to the schools, not a layer of complexity to their work.”

Challenges were also seen in terms of the academic preparedness of students and mitigating such unpreparedness. Students are seen as having poor reading comprehension, and some students struggle with English skills. Such a

situation, according to one participant, makes it challenging to “improve student academic performance and meet higher standards while also increasing graduation rates.”

Parental involvement and family background were also seen as challenges to be overcome in improving education outcomes. Participants noted that academic success “is often tied to family/guardian involvement in their child’s education.” Some students are seen as having families that do not value education, while other participants felt that families in “ethnic/immigrant communities...may not necessarily have direct communications or bilingual support.”

Participants frequently commented on challenges related to establishing and maintaining partnerships between schools and community organizations, funding of schools, and finding appropriate volunteers available to work with diverse student populations. Less commonly noted challenges, though still receiving several mentions from participants, included the need to better incorporate modern technology in the classroom, the lack of mentors and tutors, accommodating diverse learning styles, effectively reaching minority and immigrant students, ensuring that schools have the resources they need to support improved academic outcomes and implementation of service opportunities, and getting CNCS to support service-learning as a tool for academic success.

Opportunities

Participants also talked about what opportunities CNCS has for service within the education focus area. The most common responses related to opportunities for partnerships or collaborative efforts in education. Participants saw opportunities for collaboration both between CNCS programs and with other entities. As one participant noted, “CNCS needs to promote cross stream (VISTA, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve) collaboration. Should be about meeting the educational outcomes of our kids in as many ways possible in the same community - not a bunch of service efforts being done without knowing what each other is doing.” Several participants saw opportunities for CNCS to partner with other government agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Others saw opportunities to collaborate with community-based and faith-based organization, community colleges and vocational schools, and “informal youth development organizations such as 4-H, Boys and Girls Club, etc.”

Participants frequently mentioned opportunities for students to engage in service or participate in service-learning projects in order to tap into the “tremendous level of energy, idealism and commitment to service” among today’s youth. One participant saw an opportunity to develop “a widespread understanding that service-learning creates better student achievement...because of the direct, and therefore

personal, engagement with the community service.” Another commented that “service-learning can impact school culture and can create an environment where learning is dynamic. We are remiss if we don’t use it strategically in this way.”

Participants noted opportunities to include a wide range of citizens and organizations in service related to the education focus area. In one city, participants suggested day care providers, parent-teacher associations, libraries, and faith-based mentors. In another city, participants expressed a desire to include “after school and day care providers, civic clubs and chambers of commerce, economic-community development groups, [and] local government.” Other participants included neighborhood associations, the unemployed, and prisoners re-entering the community among those who could be engaged in service. Some participants added the mental health community and teen dropouts to the list, while others saw opportunities to engage “recent college graduates and mid-career professionals,” returned Peace Corps volunteers, and “paraprofessionals and other non-classroom assistants who could make the transition into the full-time classroom.”

Further opportunities were seen regarding the potential to incorporate volunteers into efforts to enhance education. Participants saw opportunities for volunteers to “create support for kids transitioning after high school... [to] help these kids get into college or career path.” Others saw roles for volunteers to help rural areas recruit

and manage other volunteers and for AmeriCorps volunteers in supporting service-learning programming. Several comments expressed interest in “harnessing the experience of the baby boom generation” in service.

Participants also saw great opportunities for additional mentoring and tutoring in schools. One participant noted that “study after study has shown that just the presence of a mentor can help guide a child toward success in school and toward college.” Participants saw opportunities both for adults in the community to participate in mentoring and tutoring and also for students in schools to mentor and tutor younger students.

Other opportunities include the increased involvement of parents and communities in schools and students’ lives. One participant suggested that service could “create more opportunities for parents to have a formal role in their child’s school/community.” Another participant saw “an opportunity to re-think the traditional partners involved in education and recruit business and other community groups to take on an active role in the educational process and linking youth to meaningful, engaging educational opportunities.”

Additional opportunities mentioned by participants include better utilization of technology to enhance education, support for teachers engaged in service-learning or other innovative teaching methods, and tailoring service-learning to enhance career preparedness among students.

FOCUS AREA: HEALTHY FUTURES

Below is a summary of the comments for the Healthy Futures focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Healthy Futures webinar held on July 27, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Collaboration among stakeholders

Participants mentioned multiple types of collaboration, including collaboration between community agencies and businesses, between networks of services, between AmeriCorps and VISTA, and between community non-profit organizations, specifically “smaller ones that go unnoticed.” Participants also noted the importance of relationships that “last after the initial goals are met.” One participant articulated another form of collaboration: “Identification of other federal funding streams from other agencies will also include support for national service programs that focus on Healthy Fu-



tures. There is no reason why other government agencies can't contribute to national service by collaborating with CNCS programs and their partners and creating funding opportunities in some of their existing programs that connect with national service priorities.”

Educating the public

Healthy futures for youth and elderly groups are seen as measures of success. Educating and encouraging people to make healthy choices about diet and exercise were the two areas mentioned most often. Educating youth about healthy choices was emphasized throughout the discussions, i.e., “start early and establish new lifestyles.” One participant also noted that, “if service isn't focused on the healthy futures of the youngest members of society, their futures as adults will be at-risk.” Senior education was also a priority; there were several comments about providing “nutrition education to senior groups and low cost cooking classes.”

Independent living for seniors

Supporting independent living by seniors was mentioned throughout the discussions; for example, “In the area of quality of life for older Americans: very few seniors will be forced into nursing home care and will receive a range of supports within the community, including consistent interaction with volunteers such as Senior Companions who provide opportunities to identify individuals at risk and to intervene

to prevent loneliness and depression which aggravate chronic health problems.” Funding for programs that enable independent living was seen as a roadblock; as one participant noted, “we are poised to double or triple in size, locally, but no expansion funds are available from CNCS, and private giving has really dropped off. Please consider making independent living a high priority, and plan to invest more federal resources in the Senior Companion Program in order to leverage more local money. It’s a model that works! Let’s take it to scale nationally!”

Measuring results

Another reoccurring theme was the need to track results in order to be successful. Participants noted that “we see a decrease in obesity rates in children, however, this is hard to measure, and after 5 years of a program, if it is done right could reflect this in children’s BMIs. Resources will need to be put into tracking this.” In order to be more successful, it is important to track results. As one participant noted, “The impact that VISTA/AmeriCorps has had in the area of service is great and we can do a better job of tracking success. Youth obesity continues to be a challenge and only together will we be able to make a difference. I can see success in 5 years with the tracking and trending of program impact on youth, families, and communities.” Participants also mentioned measuring the benefit to seniors of programs that cater to their needs.

Green spaces utilization

Many participants are eager to see more green spaces such as parks, trails and urban community gardens. Along with the availability of more green spaces, there is a need for programs that encourage community members to utilize those spaces. One participant described this idea as follows: “Organizing and linking low income communities (operating system) to safe and free facilities (hardware) and programming those facilities with free programs (software).”

Diverse Populations

The question regarding new populations to engage in service received a wide variety of responses. One population mentioned multiple times is “parents of young children, help them learn about health issues.” Two other populations mentioned often are business professionals and minorities. Engaging people from low-income communities will facilitate “working together to hear their collective voices on their needs as they identify them.” One participant said that for “marginalized populations, too often national service is seen as an opportunity for the privileged to serve the needy. National service should seek to over represent within national service those that are also beneficiaries of the service.” Other populations to engage in service include people with mental health problems, substance abuse problems, the homeless, the unemployed, and “non-college bound young people who have passion and good ideas.”

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

There were multiple critiques offered of the proposed key objectives. One participant, for example, stated that “the Corporation has narrowed the performance indicators to two very small populations, over weight and older adults. Failing to identify expectations enhances the Corporation’s ability to claim mission accomplished now before anything is done.” Other objectives that participants felt should have been included are health education and the elimination of health disparities. Safety was seen as a key objective for several participants, as illustrated by one comment that “you need to add an objective addressing the safety needs of our youth. Safety is a basic need and with many youth at risk of abuse, neglect and abandonment it seems relevant to have safety as a priority.”

Improve the quality of life for older Americans

The ability of seniors to live in their homes as they age was the most frequently mentioned theme related to improving the quality of life for older Americans. Participants suggested various programs and strategies to make that a reality. Access to services for seniors is viewed as another important objective. Programs that support inter-generational collaboration were also mentioned throughout the discussions. There are a variety of opportunities for these interactions, including tutoring, mentoring, and

healthy eating and living classes that can be taught by seniors. Also, youth can provide services by participating in companion or exercise programs for seniors.

Reduce obesity rates

Education programs for youth were seen as an important solution. These education programs can be implemented in school curriculums, after-school programs, and programs in a community setting. Participants also called for a “widespread change in social and cultural view of eating habits, healthcare and programs for older Americans.” “[Increasing] knowledge of healthy eating, shopping on a budget and healthy lifestyles,” were viewed as keys to bringing about a change in obesity rates.

“Increase the number of people who engage in sustained healthy activities and make healthy choices which leads to a change in lifestyle. ”

Participant in San Antonio, TX

Participants also frequently mentioned wanting an overall “increase in access to affordable healthy nutrition.” Similarly, another important

theme is giving target populations access to affordable fresh produce, locally grown food, and opportunities to plant community gardens. Participants expressed a desire to “expand the tie between healthy futures and local food and food education.”

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

Many participants suggested that tying education programs together in an easily accessible network is a programming direction that should be taken to meet key objectives. As one participant noted, “the process will build a network of ‘healthy lifestyle’ programs that will foster healthier communities.” An example of such a network would be to “link educational institutions such as colleges and universities to community needs in regards to areas around childhood obesity. Mentor-based programs. Role models.” Another format could be a “train the trainer model to teach parents to model healthy lifestyles and healthy eating on a budget.” A related idea that was raised was “service-learning programs [that] will link information and action about childhood obesity with in-school learning.”

Creating partnerships is seen as a programming

direction that will bring about lasting change, such as partnering with “foundations/federal agencies/etc. that provide funding in the areas mentioned - for example use foundation funding to provide the match for AmeriCorps and/or VISTA members doing the work.” Building capacity within organizations is another lever that can bring about change. As one participant noted, “resources for organizational training and infrastructure development [are] required. Volunteer professionals could lead the effort.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

“Insufficient funding for achieving the outcomes” was presented as a challenge. One participant noted that “Senior Corps programs have been making huge impacts on the lives of individuals, organizations and communities since the 1960s. They play a very significant role in service, but funding has been reduced or level for years - that is and will continue to be a challenge if not addressed.” Lack of funding, as well as the rules to obtain funding, is said to limit the capacity of programs as well as the ability to retain well-trained volunteers. As one participant said, “all the current impacts are important and vital—this is not about changing those services but rather providing appropriate levels of support including funding to what is already working. We are about to

face the greatest number of older Americans in our history; now is not the time for ‘new gimmicks’ but rather to support proven projects.”

Cultural stigmas are barriers that prevent services from reaching the target populations. Participants also felt that “crime rate, cost, cultural and age bias, and liability” are barriers. Another barrier is transportation, specifically that volunteers and target populations who live in rural areas have difficulty finding public transportation if they do not have their own vehicles. The presence of silos is also seen as a current challenge. There are apparent “turf issues” that could be dissipated with collaboration and the breaking down of silos.

Participants in some of the later dialogues had concerns about the narrow focus of the new key objective. A few participants mentioned that the narrow focus of the objective does not take into consideration the impact on those that are providing the service. One participant raised another issue with the new objective, asking “What about disease, prevention, intervention strategies, drugs, alcohol, teen pregnancy, STDs, etc.?”

Opportunities

Utilizing seniors as volunteers was viewed as a way to both engage seniors in healthy activities as well as to provide positive role models for youth. One participant said that “mobilizing older adults in mentoring youth will definitely have a positive impact in the recipients as well as the older adults who are acting as healthy

role models.” A specific program model mentioned by one participant is as follows: “Foster Grandparents can serve children in many areas other than academics. Childhood obesity should be one of them. This would address both parties. Senior Companions also could be integral in the nutrition of other seniors. RSVP could be trained in nutrition to help serve seniors and children within the community. I see many opportunities for all three of the Senior Corps programs to be extremely important in meeting the strategic goals of the Corporation.” By utilizing seniors, the often mentioned issue of loneliness among the population of seniors will be addressed. As one participant said, “Increased volunteers [achieve] higher self-worth as they contribute to society, rewarding them with benefits [and attaining] defined measurable outcomes such as quality of life, reducing loneliness/isolation [and] therefore reducing depression.”

A focus on youth development was the most widely referenced idea throughout the discussions. There was a desire expressed to have youth serve as thought leaders instead of “children [being] seen as the problem and not given the opportunity to serve as the solution.” Another participant stated, “We have provided, for the past two years, a robust small grants service-learning program to young people to come up with an idea of how to develop an initiative to deal with childhood obesity. Youth themselves assume the responsibility - youth serve, and are not just served.” Another participant emphasized that “youth - as young as five

- can assume the responsibility for being effective problem solvers, as they design and implement solutions to childhood obesity.” Participants encouraged the Corporation to develop youth through service as a means to help them make good decisions throughout their lives.

FOCUS AREA: CLEAN ENERGY³

Below is a summary of the comments for the Clean Energy focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Clean Energy webinar held on July 22, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Conservation in homes and workplaces

Participants were asked what success would look like in five years under the framework of service as a solution. The most common responses related to efforts to encourage energy conservation efforts in homes and workplaces. One participant said that success “will also mean having made significant retrofits to conserve energy.” Another noted that “90% of low income homes in our state would have had energy audits conducted and the volunteers who perform the audits would have skills that could transfer to employment.” One participant regards success as “service programs [leading] to increased home efficiency and increased conservation in communities and homes.”

Utilizing volunteer service

Also common as an indicator of success was the use of volunteers in clean energy efforts. Participants’ suggestions included “volunteer energy education efforts [resulting in]

an overall drop in energy consumption in a specific region” and “one million volunteers [being] recruited by AmeriCorps members and [providing] 10 million hours of service working to address clean energy issues.” Others saw volunteers playing key roles in helping make homes more energy efficient, or educating the public about using public transportation or other ways to reduce energy consumption. Service also can lead to successfully preparing service



members for jobs in the green economy. Other commonly-cited measures of success among respondents include capitalizing on the passion and knowledge of youth regarding environmental issues, preservation of open spaces and the natural environment, and an overall increase in the education and awareness of citizens about clean energy. One comment depicted success as “student ownership in developing innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to clean energy in the process of their education.”

³ The title for this focus area was changed to Environmental Stewardship in late August 2010.

In addition, participants noted the importance of engaging diverse populations in clean energy service in order to achieve successful outcomes. In one city, participants noted an opportunity to engage “realtors, ...contractors, [and those] businesses in the private sector that have shared values and common interests as those involved in environmental work.” Other participants saw a need to incorporate into clean energy service people of color, HBCUs, scientists, auto retailers, and rural electric cooperatives.

Less commonly noted, but receiving several mentions from respondents, were measures of success that include CNCS forming partnerships or collaborations around clean energy, reducing the harmful effects of vehicular travel, and securing the necessary funding to implement clean energy programming.

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

Other objectives

Several comments referred to the key objective of reducing energy consumption, most of which suggested that the current objective is too narrow. One participant felt that “excluding stewardship of our parks and preserved lands under this objective would be a significant disservice to rural states where the environment is closely tied with tourism and therefore a viable economy.” Similarly, another participant

wanted to see “key objectives including protecting our country’s natural resources - parks, rivers, open space, public lands.” Still another added, “I don’t think having one very limited objective under the environment will look like success. If you are saying that we at the local level are best at knowing and solving problems, there needs to be a broader environmental objective.”

Other participants suggested that the key objectives should include decreasing pollution, finding and promoting alternative energies, wildfire prevention, and supporting outdoor recreation and education through trail and facility improvements. As one participant expressed, “in the Clean Energy focus area, success has BOTH an energy reduction component, AND a traditional environmental/conservation service component. Just as important as reducing energy consumption through activities like weatherizing homes, is service to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change through activities like habitat restoration, planting trees, reducing wildfires, building trails for alternative transportation, etc.”

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

During the course of the dialogues, participants made comments about programming directions for CNCS related to clean energy. In some instances, these programming directions were specific to CNCS's key objective of reducing energy consumption; in others, participants offered programming directions for objectives different from the key objective.

Among programming directions specific to reducing energy consumption, those that received the most comments by participants were programming opportunities related to making housing more energy efficient and promoting recycling. Participants wanted to see programming "focusing on housing and making it livable as well as efficient" and a standardized energy audit that volunteers could use to help residents understand their energy usage. AmeriCorps members could "work with businesses to do LEED architectural improvements." Others wanted to see programming to help homeowners "understand the opportunity, benefits, and how to use" their respective state's tools for promoting energy efficiency. Participants saw recycling programs as in need of "re-invigoration," and saw service-learning and college students are key volunteers who could "envision new possibilities" for such programs. Others suggested volunteers could help communities broaden the reach of their recycling efforts to encompass the recycling of "everything [from] building material to water."

Among programming directions not specific to reducing energy consumption, participants

expressed interest in programming that protects the natural environment, encourages young people to become more active through outdoor activities, and promotes a green economy workforce.

Participants expressed support for expanding the key objective to include "protecting our country's natural resources" and "stewarding/preserving green open spaces and educating the public on its importance to our overall well-being." Many participants saw a role for youth in this regard, expressing an interest in "connecting young people to public lands through service," and targeting childhood obesity by "getting kids outside working the land."

Participants also wanted programming to help "build a ready workforce for [the] energy economy." One participant noted the importance of building green jobs in light of the current poor economy, adding that "perhaps we could fund some of the training for these clean energy jobs in our local colleges."

Finally, participants saw opportunities for organization and individual capacity building related to clean energy, especially by way of education. Participants saw opportunities for businesses, schools, and faith-based groups to educate and train others on how to better solve energy-related problems. Also noted was the use of partnerships and collaborations to share knowledge and strategies. In one city, participants suggested that a strategy for capacity building was a conflict resolution process in

which stakeholders can “resolve local energy and environmental needs.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

Participants were asked about the challenges CNCS would face and need to address in the clean energy focus area. By far the most common challenge noted was the difficulty in measuring impact. One participant noted the difficulty in achieving long term outcomes, while another stressed the need to focus on “short, intermediate” outcomes. Another participant suggested the creation of “a uniform data system for reporting rather than each state or AmeriCorps program creating one.” Also noted was the need to “demonstrate the real impact of energy conservation to families.” Still another participant expressed the desire for CNCS to “stay away from trying to measure reductions in carbon footprint, etc. and focus more on the type of capacity that’s being put in place at the local level to undertake (and sustain) green solutions.”

Several participants also noted that a formidable challenge is the level of expertise required to implement clean energy programming. Many comments mirror this participant’s opinion that within the clean energy focus area “there seems to be a huge range of experience, knowledge, resources, etc. This hasn’t happened in the other areas. This is the only area

that requires a certain [amount] of technical background to even get started.”

Other commonly noted challenges include building the extensive, cohesive collaborations that are required to tackle clean energy problems, securing sufficient funding for clean energy efforts, and changing consumer behavior over the long run. Still others highlighted challenges to promoting green jobs, including the lack of a marketplace to do so, and the risk that volunteering activities related to clean energy may be seen as a threat to those promoting green jobs.

Opportunities

Participants also talked about opportunities for CNCS within the clean energy focus area. The most common responses were related to opportunities for partnerships or collaborative efforts around clean energy. One participant noted the opportunity to “have a clear understanding of the types of funding/programs other federal agencies and states are putting in place to advance clean energy...then hook into these.” Another suggested CNCS could partner “with corporations so that energy consumption programs are more robust in the workplace, which research shows can translate to an employee’s home.” One participant saw an opportunity for “working with Habitat for Humanity and other non-profits to weatherize homes to save energy.” Another comment recommended “piloting efforts with state and...national parks in energy conservation efforts...[including] installing solar panels at campgrounds [and] recycling

water.”

Several participants stressed the importance of breaking down silos as part of pursuing a clean energy focus. One noted that “we need to make sure we are collaborating and leveraging existing programs [at] federal and state agencies to reduce duplicity of effort and break down some of the silos that are in place.” Another participant commented that “CNCS should make sure that each of the five focus areas are not done in silos. There should be a strong emphasis to see

“Educate community leaders (elected officials, business leaders, civic organizations, religious institutions etc.) to set goals and desired futures for what we want our communities to become.”

Participant in Vicksburg, MS

where projects/programs align. For example service projects to reduce energy consumption should be tied to the [opportunity focus] i.e. job creation.”

Another frequently expressed idea was the

opportunity to engage youth in clean energy efforts. Participants noted that “everything starts with our public school students. As they learn that they have the power to promote immediate change, they also influence their families to actively focus on conservation.” Another participant suggested that “it’s probably really important to think about opportunities as they relate to different streams of service (and different servers, e.g. students K-high education, older adults/encore service, young adults, NCCC, Senior Corps) because I think each could contribute in a different way. For example, the focus for students and young adults might be on projects that have an immediate energy use reduction benefit, but also build a broader constituency (and therefore use more education) for energy conservation.”

Many participants expressed a belief that CNCS has an opportunity to educate and raise awareness about clean energy issues and specific steps citizens can take to reduce their energy consumption and reduce their energy-related costs. Several others noted opportunities to promote specific energy conservation initiatives, especially recycling. Less commonly noted, but receiving several comments from respondents, were opportunities to encourage local food networks, implement residential energy audits or weatherization initiatives, promote stewardship of natural areas, promote transportation alternatives, and incorporate the efforts of the senior population.

FOCUS AREA: OPPORTUNITY

Below is a summary of the comments for the Opportunity focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Opportunity webinar held on July 14, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Collaboration among stakeholders

Success is seen as collaboration among various constituents by “building social capital between resource rich and resource strapped communities; bringing marginalized populations into service and helping them utilize service as a bridge to integration, employment, self sufficiency and interdependency; and using innovative approaches to address the root causes of social problems.” Participants mentioned collaboration in the form of multidisciplinary service teams, between Commissions and National Directs, in peer exchanges, and between for-profit and non-profit entities. These relationships are seen as building the capacity of all involved, fostering the sharing of best practices and operational frameworks, and breaking down existing silos.

Addressing local needs

Another view of success is using local resources to address local needs. One participant noted that a form of success “is that which addresses local needs, what is real and happening in re-

gions across the nation.” Due to the very nature of the program and its members, AmeriCorps “cannot ‘solve’ big national problems, but it can be (and is) of tremendous help in addressing local needs.” Participants felt that one measure of success is taking a grassroots approach by using local community members as service members. In addition, “taking advantage of local knowledge and local resources” was mentioned as a component of success by multiple participants.

Access to service

Providing equal access to service is seen as a measure of success. As one participant stated, success includes “equal access to service options and a system for ensuring that it is realistic (finances, transportation, family, other obligations) for all individuals to participate in service. Service will be a viable, real option for all, not just a ‘before I get a real job’ option for new college grads.”

Financial stability and employment training

In some of the later dialogues, many participants were interested in improving financial stability and employment opportunities. Many thought that volunteerism can be an avenue to meet these goals; as one participant suggested, “National service members can play a role in development of EITC/VITA sites in communi-

ties and the development of financial management courses/seminars in communities.” An existing program model was also mentioned: “In Georgia, we have a GA Work Ready Program that prepares individuals for work utilizing a certification and training program. I am sure most states will have a similar program. National service members could help grow the capacities of these programs. Success would be an increase of individuals taking advantage of these programs to secure a job or a better job.”

Populations

Participants noted several populations that could be engaged in service. Businesses were an often mentioned; for example, they “could act as skilled mentors to AmeriCorps members working in community/economic development.” Another participant suggested that “engaging businesses may be best started through volunteer opportunities. But such opportunities need to be very well thought-out and managed. This seems like a great role for AmeriCorps members.” Participants also discussed engaging youth who are elementary school age to college age in peer to peer mentoring, 4H, boy scouts and mentoring programs. Other populations include minorities, people who work in the healthcare industry, and the unemployed.

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

Increase employment for unemployed or underemployed economically vulnerable people

A common theme among many participant comments was the need for skill development and job readiness programs for vulnerable populations. Participants repeatedly discussed the desire to engage vulnerable populations in service as a way to develop skills, which potentially leads to employment opportunities. Notably, it is important to link the local job market with skill programs. As one participant suggested, “[There is a need for] clear connections with community colleges and workforce development programs so that members are learning skills, building networks related to jobs that actually exist in a particular community.”

Skills that can be developed through service can have multiple benefits. Skills will enable individuals to gain employment, as mentioned above, but can also help those participating in service develop solutions to issues they currently face in their lives. Participants suggested that programs could include “volunteer developed and led financial education workshops” pertaining to financial stability, housing, or individual rights.

Increase the number of economically vulnerable families and individuals in safe, affordable housing

Participants made comments about the need for safe and affordable housing for vulnerable families. The distinction between home ownership and safe and affordable housing was mentioned multiple times. For example, one participant stated that “safe affordable housing



is most important to addressing many challenges in our communities. Home ownership is not necessarily imperative.” However, several participants did mention the need to prioritize affordable home ownership for vulnerable families as a goal in the next five years.

Participants expressed the opinion that education via community outreach programs is an important lever that will aid people in securing safe and affordable housing. Programs should cover individual rights and opportunities that exist regarding affordable housing programs. Other suggestions for programs include providing intake and transitioning assistance, along with free legal advice for people who need it regarding evictions or home purchasing.

Increase financial stability of economically vulnerable families and individuals

Participants mentioned the key objective of financial stability less than the other two key objectives in the opportunity focus area. Nonetheless, there was a clear call for more financial management programs that will act as a method of “increasing knowledge as well as understanding of the benefits of managing finances.” Multiple participants suggested the need for financial education programs that target youth. In vulnerable families this will encourage financial acumen from a young age, reaching youth while they are “still young and aren’t yet in debt/financially unstable.”

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

Participants repeatedly made the link between skill development, employment, financial stability, and safe and affordable housing. If families are able to find steady employment, they will be better able to stay in safe and affordable housing. Finding steady employment is seen as linked to the need for skill-building opportunities, which can be achieved through service.

Participants called for education and mentoring programs to help vulnerable populations

become financially stable, find employment, and secure affordable and safe housing. One idea that has multiple benefits is to have those that are vulnerable teach the classes and act as mentors. By “encouraging programs to engage the populations typically served in developing and implementing efforts versus just receiving services,” the multiple benefits of skills obtained during service can be actualized. Volunteers can also act as mentors and “share their success stories and pitfalls and help educate the underserved.” Multiple participants discussed the lack of awareness about available benefits and programs and noted that target populations need to be connected with services.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

Participants called for a “paradigm shift in how Americans work” and suggested the need to increase the value of volunteerism. There is a “challenge in educating [the] right stakeholders on the value of service.” One idea offered was to work with youth from an early age to build the right habits and form the right perspectives around service. Participants felt that new ways need to be created to promote a sense of civic responsibility.

Another challenge was seen regarding the funding of service. Multiple participants en-

couraged CNCS to increase the living stipend to the living wage, or alternatively to reduce the burden on members by paying for expenses such as transportation. Multiple participants felt that CNCS should direct more funding to VISTA.

Child care for service members was also seen as a challenge. As one participant said, “child care is essential to seeing service as a solution. The target population can only embrace opportunity if safe, affordable child care is part of the plan.” Specifically, child care is needed for families in training and for those living in rural areas where public transportation is not available. If these barriers could be removed, vulnerable populations would be able to serve and work more easily. In addition, participants mentioned that educational attainment requirements and prior service experience are two other barriers to equal access to service opportunities.

Challenges around housing opportunities were often mentioned in some of the later dialogues. For example, one participant discussed the supply and demand of housing related to funding for education in low-income neighborhoods. Another participant suggested an idea to “create new housing programs dedicated to not only building new inexpensive housing, but rehabbing older homes in a low cost fashion.”

Multiple participants also mentioned the need to “break down splintered, silos of service [and offer] better coordination of services and resources.” In the current fragmented system,

“resources fall short of demand.” Participants called for more collaboration among agencies and “shared collective services.”

Opportunities

Most of the challenges discussed by participants were also viewed as opportunities for improvement. Themes mentioned as both opportunities and challenges include building capacity, collaborating, tracking results, job training, employment opportunities, reaching

“Target job development programs for CNCS grants by mobilizing local knowledge to identify the local organizations best suited to increase job opportunities.”

Participant in Memphis, TN

vulnerable populations, and placing value on volunteering.

Many participants felt that an opportunity lies in “tracking the results annually to determine the effectiveness of these programs.” There is also a need to “pick the right evaluation mea-

asures, something that non-profits and grant officers can measure reasonably and effectively.” Multiple participants discussed the need to collect data now to use as baseline measures, since we “need [a] baseline understanding of where we are currently having impact and what communities we are missing and therefore need to address in the future.” One related issue is that “many communities have not done a needs analysis or asset mapping.”

Participants suggested that there is an opportunity to develop leadership skills in service members. For example, the Corporation should “let people identify their own needs, and develop more opportunities for leadership development within these neighborhoods.” Another idea is to be “developing the leadership skills of AmeriCorps members, who might also be local residents and future civic leaders in their own local communities.”

FOCUS AREA: VETERANS

Below is a summary of the comments for the Veterans focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Veterans webinar held on July 29, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Access to information regarding available services

Many participants emphasized the need to get information out to veterans about the benefits available to them and their families. Success would mean that veterans know where to go to find out what assistance is available to them, and that services are being utilized. The number of veterans who need help is increasing, and service efforts can “educate veterans on what services are available to help them and where to find them.” As one participant said, service programs can “engage veterans in volunteer services to become aware of and access services.”



Veterans continuing to serve

Participants felt that success would mean veterans both serving and being provided with services. As one participant noted, “providing veterans with an opportunity for continuing service after leaving their military service would benefit both veterans and those they serve.” Another participant noted that “empowerment of the veteran via service allows them to reintegrate into the community successfully.”

“Empowerment of the veteran via service allows them to reintegrate into the community successfully.”

Participant in New Orleans, LA

More generally, success would mean engaging more veterans as participants in service and giving veterans “the opportunity to be leaders in national service through volunteerism.” One participant envisioned service opportunities in the future in which veterans “are a resource for all three Senior Corps programs and can be especially beneficial in mentoring and tutoring children, mentoring younger veterans, and meeting the various other needs in our com-

munities.” Participants also emphasized that veterans could be volunteer leaders and could assume leadership positions within non-profits.

Participants felt that success would mean veterans’ “holistic needs” are addressed, “providing solutions that help them with all aspects of their life rather than solving a single problem.” This could take the form of more one-stop shop services for veterans. In addition, service programs should focus not just on individual veterans, but on military families as a whole.

Homelessness

One participant noted that “focus groups should be held with veterans who are homeless or were formerly homeless to gain insight on how national service could support them.” Many participants mentioned that success would include reducing homelessness in veterans. As “homeless shelters are seeing an increase in younger homeless veterans,” participants felt that “this is an opportunity to have a ready and captive audience. An audience that would [be] willing [to] share if they were exposed to opportunities or any other initiatives: they could realize self sufficiency.”

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

Increase economic opportunity for veterans and military families

Participants felt that veterans programs could

provide volunteer opportunities that lead to paying jobs, as well as opportunities for veterans to reintegrate into civilian jobs using skills that they learned in their military service.

Other objectives

Participants suggested that the objectives in the veterans focus area should extend beyond economic opportunities. For example, key objectives could also include an increase in safe and affordable housing for veterans and their families, as well as a reduction in the number of homeless veterans. Objectives should also “address the health care needs and reintegration challenges” that veterans face upon returning to civilian life. Many participants spoke about the need to help veterans readjust to civilian life, integrate back into their communities, and help them feel that they are not alone. Existing programs that help with this transition include Washington State’s VetCorps and Navigator programs. Service programs can help veterans “find meaning and focus in their lives,” as well as mitigate problems such as divorce and suicide.

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

Participants spoke about peer support as a strategy to engage veterans in service, with

veterans helping other veterans. As one participant noted, “service as a solution will utilize vets to mentor and help other vets transition to civilian life.” In doing so, “the older veteran will find value in sharing their experience and hope, while the younger veteran receives the much needed support and guidance during their transition.” Other ideas include connecting retired veterans with more recent veterans, and having veterans with psychological injuries serve fellow veterans who have sustained physical disabilities.

Participants also mentioned the importance of “partnerships between veteran service organizations and volunteer connector organizations.” Examples of such partnerships, either currently existing or suggested for the future, include non-profit and service organizations partnering with Senior Corps programs, the Veterans Green Corps partnership between Veterans Green Jobs and the conservation corps, the Operation Welcome Home partnership between service programs, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Employment Development Department, and a new partnership between AmeriCorps and the USO.

On an individual level, business executives could partner with veterans through service to help mentor them and aide their return to civilian life. Mentors in schools could serve military children, and the spouses of wounded soldiers who are further along in recovery could mentor other spouses.

Participants also felt that “it is important to conduct a needs assessment” and communicate with returning veterans to ask them what assistance they need before programs begin. Doing so would ensure that “we are providing the right services, the wanted services, the needed services, and the services that work.” Many returning veterans need help maneuvering through benefits and assistance with injuries that may not have been diagnosed until after they return; service can play a role in alleviating some of these challenges and referring veterans to the right organizations. One participant suggested that “CNCS officials could provide clearinghouse lists of the services available for local programs, and make local authorities aware that CNCS programs are here to help.” Another participant noted that “...it would be beneficial if the Corporation had a key person who would act as a liaison between the military and veteran services and the Service Corps programs so that there is an organized effort instead of a piecemeal approach. The Military and Corporation need to establish clear communication links and collaboration. [The] Corporation should create a Public Relations Specialist/Liaison and [the] Military should be encouraged to do the same.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

Participants noted the importance of messaging, that the “sensitivity of message of volunteer service needs to be carefully crafted.” Messaging is particularly important for this population because veterans may feel like they have already served, and some may not understand the purpose of volunteerism. As one participant stated, the challenge is in “changing their mindset from serving their country in the way they originally saw it to a new and different way to be of service—that this can also be of value and give them meaning.”

Some challenges were seen as related to rules and regulations that prevent service organizations from effectively connecting with veterans. For example, VISTAs cannot serve on military bases because they are considered paid volunteers, AmeriCorps members are not able to serve full-time in the VA, members cannot serve in a VA hospital, and veterans organizations are classified in such a way that RSVP’s MOUs are not applicable. It appears that there are some differences among national service streams and acceptance into facilities. One participant suggested the need for an MOU between the VA, the office of military families, and CNCS: “The Corporation could look to developing [a] partnership with [the] VA to

open doors locally and facilitate a dialogue.” As one participant noted, “community organizations [are] unable to get through red tape.” In addition, some veterans issues require specific interventions that are not provided by national service organizations.

Many comments related to the challenges of partnerships and how CNCS needs to coordinate “with the many organizations serving the military community” and get “engaged with the national veterans organizations to support efforts in every state with every governor.” Participants stressed the need to develop partnerships so that local, state, and national initiatives were working together for veterans. The challenge is not to duplicate the services already available, but to collaborate with other agencies in order to make available services easier to obtain. One participant suggested “creating a coordinated services network that lets the veterans tell their story once and then we match their need with the best organization or service.” Several comments addressed the concern that there is a turf battle between the VA and local non-profits, and that other organizations think “that you are stepping on their toes and taking money away from their services.”

Participants mentioned a few additional challenges. Some felt that there is a lack of understanding and knowledge of what is currently happening with national service programs and wondered if an environmental scan had been done of current efforts. In addition, a challenge

is seen in how to identify which services are available to veterans, seeing if there are gaps in services that are not being addressed, and making veterans aware of these services. Other challenges involve handling the geographically-diverse nature of the veteran population, such as how to conduct outreach to veterans who do not live in conventional military communities or how to connect with communities that do not have VA hospitals and clinics. In addition, participants mentioned the many challenges surrounding PTSD and mental health issues experienced by veterans returning from service.

Opportunities

As noted above, participants felt there was an opportunity to help make veterans aware of, and utilize, the programs and services that are available to them. There is also an opportunity to help military families. As one participant noted, “we also have the opportunity to really impact military families and help curb the tide of divorce.”

Many participants spoke about the opportunity for veterans to serve other veterans, whether in peer-to-peer networks, training a service dog for a fellow veteran, bringing services to homeless veterans in rural areas, or older veterans welcoming home the next generation of veterans. This type of service is particularly powerful, as “the act of helping a fellow veteran provides a continued sense of a mission that maintains the time honored tradition of veterans helping veterans. This is a symbolic

opportunity to serve multiple groups of veterans in need.”

Participants spoke about the opportunity for veterans to get involved in existing programs, for example the Senior Corps, or for service programs to build off the success of existing events such as Stand Down. As one participant noted, “veterans feel the need for their

“Utilize the training and leadership skills of veterans to create meaningful change at the community level.”

Participant in the Veterans webinar

‘next mission assignment.’ This can be service... There is an inherent commitment to serve.” Veterans return with many skills, and service programs can utilize “the training and leadership skills of veterans to create meaningful change at the community level.” “Veterans are a huge untapped resource for volunteer work” and “they can transition their skill sets into other service opportunities, hence further developing themselves and making themselves more marketable.”

There is also an opportunity for service programs to build relationships with veterans associations and to connect with non-profits that have had success in working with and

supporting veterans. Service programs could “help non-profits who do this work to find sustainable funding” and expand their capacity to better serve more veterans. Participants also suggested working with local military bases and other federal agencies, especially the VA.

FOCUS AREA: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Below is a summary of the comments for the Disaster Preparedness focus area. The comments come from face-to-face dialogues, audience webinars, and the Disaster Preparedness webinar held on August 4, 2010.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Training volunteers in disaster preparedness and response

Across all audiences and geographies, the most common responses related to efforts to institute training in disaster preparedness and disaster response. Participants saw training as important both for service members to receive, and to conduct for others in need of training. One participant noted that success would mean “enough volunteers ready and willing and able to help in an emergency [and] having been trained in a specific skill that they might be called on to use.” Others would measure success as “the types of trainings provided, the number of trainings provided, [and] the number of members trained to provide preparedness trainings.” Participants also felt that success would include not just one time trainings, but rather volunteers “who understand the commitment for regular training, drills and deployment.” Another emphasized the need for a quick response team of “national service members [that could be] deployed and

on the ground within 24 hours of the disaster.” Participants in one city regard success as an increased number of volunteers, a reduction in their response time, and the number of volunteers engaged in disaster relief over a sustained period of time. In another city, success includes “tracking volunteer outreach efforts pre-disaster.”



Collaboration among stakeholders

Also seen as important to success among many participants were partnerships and collaborations among a diverse group of CNCS programs, other volunteer organizations, and federal, state, and local government entities. Participants saw a need for “a clear process for the local agencies to connect with outside CNCS programs” and saw success as “a combination of national service members, CERT, and volunteer centers [working] together at the state level to support disaster response and recovery.” One participant noted that “it is imperative that National Service assets be linked

into an emergency management system with other stakeholders and partners to collaborate, cooperate and communicate with local communities in a supportive and sustainable manner.” Similarly, participants thought success would include state plans for how to incorporate service members into disaster response. As one participant noted, success would include states having “requirements to link disaster response activities with AmeriCorps programs and how national service members can be deployed in times of emergency.”

Yet another commonly expressed measure of success was evidence of capacity building in communities related to disaster preparedness and response. As one participant noted, “success for us means knowing that individuals, families and communities have the knowledge they need to be prepared, to access available resources and be involved in their community by perhaps becoming a CERT volunteer.”

Diverse populations

Other common measures of success among participants include the recruitment of additional volunteers by service members and outreach to minority, low-income, disabled, and immigrant communities. Participants noted opportunities to include a wide range of citizens and organizations in service related to disaster preparedness. Often cited was the business community, existing first responders, and non-profit organizations such as the Red Cross and Boy and Girl Scouts. Participants felt that it is critical to involve rural and inner-city citi-

zens and that it is more difficult to keep these populations engaged over time. In one city, participants saw a need for outreach to non-English speakers using translated materials. In another city, participants felt that veterans, at-risk youth, and special needs youth should be engaged. Success is seen as youth being “prepared and able to respond, especially when not with [their] family” and the “creation of community youth programs and plan.” In one city, participants felt that opportunities exist to incorporate low-income residents, youth, and those with “mental, physical, [and] emotional” special needs.

THEMES RELATED TO THE PROPOSED KEY OBJECTIVES

Increasing capacity of at-risk/vulnerable communities to serve citizens in the event of a disaster

The general tone of the discussions suggests that participants were in support of the key objectives of increasing the capacity of at-risk/vulnerable communities to serve citizens in the event of a disaster and improving communities in disaster-affected areas. For the most part, participants spoke about disaster preparedness and response in general terms, without specific emphasis on how select geographies or population groups could increase their capacity to respond. There was, though, mention of the need to help “youth of all ages learn how to help [themselves], parents, family and pets

be prepared.” Others noted the importance of engaging senior populations in preparedness planning and response, especially in partnership with RSVP members. One participant expressed the value of a “needs assessment” for vulnerable populations in his geographic region. Another suggested that at-risk communities could “reduce the effects of disasters through land use planning.” A participant suggested that CNCS could provide “resources/best practices in how to work with [local] Health and Human Services Departments to address the needs of the vulnerable populations.”

There was little conversation about the second key objective of improving communities in disaster-affected areas, as most of the conversation focused on what could happen before or during a disaster.

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET KEY OBJECTIVES

During the course of the dialogues, participants made comments about programming directions for CNCS related to disaster preparedness. The most commonly noted programming directions related to how CNCS members can help communities prepare for and respond to a disaster. One participant noted that preparedness could

be a key programming direction because “not much has been done in the preparedness field - many agencies are involved with response and recovery, but preparedness is very important in mitigating negative effects. CNCS can help communities become prepared on a larger scale.”

“There should be innovation and demonstration funds established to support exemplary programs that are able to document and transfer best practices to other state and national programs to expand effective emergency capabilities.”

Website comment

Another participant suggested creating “preventative programs, not just immediate reactive programs at time of disaster.” Such preparedness efforts could include “disaster education programs that involve schools, community centers, businesses, churches, etc.” Also seen

as useful is the development of a tool by CNCS “that will allow national service to do a sound environmental ‘preparedness’ scan in their communities in order to reach those audiences that haven’t already been reached by others.”

For many, preparedness programming should include the training, either in person or online, of CNCS members in disaster response, as well as “preparedness outreach and training [to citizens so that] they themselves will be available to respond and lead during an event.” Participants saw a role for CNCS to help states develop plans to “utilize members to provide disaster preparedness education to residents.” One participant suggested having “conversations between priority stakeholders in disaster with an outcome of a human services disaster plan.”

Others saw the need for the creation of a state-level database of available and needed volunteers for disaster response, and a 24 hour national “emergency desk” for CNCS service members to utilize in the event of a disaster in their respective communities.

Capacity building

Participants noted opportunities to expand the capacity of organizations and individuals to solve disaster preparedness problems. Participants want to “empower [a] population to help itself” and “empower communities to vocalize their concerns.” Participants called for increased communication between various organizations engaged in disaster preparedness

service. In one city, a participant noted the opportunity to utilize “LEPC (Local Emergency Preparedness Councils), which include business/private industry, public services.” Other participants called for increased training and funding. According to one participant “there should be innovation and demonstration funds established to support exemplary programs that are able to document and transfer best practices to other state and national programs to expand effective emergency capabilities.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges

Participants were asked what challenges CNCS would face and need to address in the disaster preparedness focus area. Despite the common sentiment among participants that service members should be engaged in training, either as recipients or providers, there was disagreement about what sorts of training should be included. Some participants felt that a challenge will be supporting training opportunities in diverse areas with different disaster preparedness needs. Some noted that “each and every disaster is different” and thus requires place-specific training, while others saw the need for disaster preparedness training that is “consistent across the country.” As one participant said, “disaster preparedness in a frontier, very rural state looks different. Awareness on

the part of the reviewers/commission to take seriously the vast differences in our resources and issues is extremely important.”

According to participants, turf wars represent another challenge to disaster preparedness. One participant said that “sometimes folks are territorial [and] not willing to work together,” while another commented that “agencies resist collaboration on disaster planning.” Another participant noted that “state programs resent national programs coming in.”

Another commonly cited challenge is the need to have clearly delineated roles and clear expectations for service members involved in disaster preparedness. Several participants’ sentiments were expressed in the comment that “a clear definition of what AmeriCorps can do in the Impact zone...i.e. preparedness, readiness and response activities...will reduce any confusion on how to engage members on what they can and can not do.”

Also noted was the challenge of making sure relevant partner organizations are aware of the availability and capabilities of service members to participate in disaster response. A respondent noted the importance of “getting the word out that AmeriCorps members are available for disaster response and recovery activities. We were prepared to respond this year, much more so than the last two years, but we did not get any calls for service.” Several comments emphasized the challenge of coordinating with partner organizations or govern-

ment entities so as to “ensure that there is not a duplication of efforts or conflicts.”

Other challenges mentioned by participants include issues of liability for those volunteers engaged in disaster response, language barriers to reaching all community members, and securing the necessary funding for training, supplies, and the crafting of disaster plans.

Opportunities

Participants were asked what opportunities exist for CNCS programs related to disaster preparedness. The most commonly stated opportunity is for service members to engage in comprehensive, flexible disaster preparedness and response. One participant commented that “by training the volunteers in both disaster pre-

“Citizens need to be prepared and able to take care of themselves.”

Participant in Cheyenne, WY

paredness and disaster response activities, we have a cadre of personnel who can participate and assist their community throughout the full circle of activities.”

Participants want to see AmeriCorps alumni “disperse across the county [where] there is an

opportunity for them to be built into a response network.” Doing so will build “the national capacity for disaster response.” Several participants stressed the need for flexibility among service members, which will “allow us to be valuable in whatever capacity is needed.”

Opportunities also exist for CNCS to help build the capacity of existing disaster response organizations. One participant noted that “there is an opportunity to build capacity in NGOs to ‘weather’ the storms that disasters cause...sharp increases for services, decrease availability to access resources, deployments of an organization plan to operate after a disaster, etc.”

Similarly, many participants saw numerous opportunities for CNCS collaboration with other disaster preparedness organizations to maximize their benefit to communities. Participants saw roles for CNCS service members to coordinate trainings with local fire and police departments, collaborate with the Red Cross and the Homeland Security department, and work with community colleges to train citizens in disaster preparedness.

Participants also saw opportunities for CNCS to raise awareness about the need for disaster preparedness and how best to achieve preparedness. Opportunities exist to make “communities aware of the needs and qualifications for volunteers in a disaster.” One participant felt there is an opportunity to “train volunteers to do [emergency preparedness] presentations and take them to where citizens are, i.e.

churches, fairs, Home Depot, etc.” Still others suggested that there are opportunities to partner “with schools so all children are educated in individual [disaster preparedness] needs.” Others expressed that opportunities exist for CNCS to engage in strategic planning with communities and disaster preparedness organizations in order to formulate effective response plans.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUES

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Below is a summary of the comments from the CNCS National Conference held in New York City, New York on June 29.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants felt that success would include “education that covers the entire age spectrum” and “utilizing implementation of best practices...evidence based programming...but allow for innovative ideas.” Participants also want to see increased readiness for school and career paths. Success would also include civically engaged students who go to schools that welcome national service because there is buy-in from leadership and teachers.

Healthy Futures

Participants felt that success in health futures would include having “a walking path in every

community,” and increasing physical activity and proper nutrition. Success would also include increasing access to health care and reducing the cost of health care by “identifying areas in our regions that contribute to high costs.” Additional measures of success include independent living, community gardens, and eliminating the risk of diabetes.

Opportunity

Participants felt that success in the opportunity focus area involves “include[ing] disabilities in description of objectives” and programs that are “totally accessible and accommodating for all disabilities.” One participant felt that “opportunity needs to remain flexible after [the] current recession.” In addition, participants felt it was important to focus on new job markets and ensure that “former members will be ready for employment. Member focus is important, especially low income members.” Success would also include CNCS partnering with other federal agencies and having different streams of service work together.

Clean Energy

Participants felt that success would include people becoming knowledgeable about clean energy and understanding different types of clean energy. Success would also include

weaving service into every state's energy program with goals regarding what service can accomplish. In addition, participants suggested that there should be a "focus on youth having the knowledge to reduce the carbon foot print."

Veterans

Participants felt that success would include veterans serving in national service programs, especially serving other veterans. Success would also include addressing health care needs and providing young veterans with "a way to serve while raising families."

Disaster Preparedness

There were no comments about disaster preparedness.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives in the education and veterans focus areas beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In the education focus area, participants frequently mentioned the goal of preparing students for college and for careers, whether they choose to go to college or not. In the veterans focus area, participants also suggested the objectives of having veterans serve other veterans as mentors and veterans receiving access to services that address their health care needs.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants suggested that one challenge is measurement since it is "hard to tease out the difference that a tutor makes with a student. Especially if it's for just a couple hours per week." Similarly, they felt that it is difficult to measure the impact of CNCS programs "because of all the variables." In addition, it is hard to get data from schools.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to "measure success from both the beneficiaries and participants" points of view and to "create a culture of evaluation, everyone geared toward results." There are also opportunities to share data on best practices, work with other agencies, and look at secondary measures.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants felt that one challenge is the lack of knowledge at the Corporation of the health focus area, and they would have like the Corporation to "ask us on the ground level before deciding on these two bullet points." It is also a challenge to set reasonable targets, have school

lunch choices, provide nutrition education, and take away the stigma of obesity.

Opportunities

There are opportunities for common and better defined performance measures across the streams of service, better training and networking, and better collaboration across silos. Additional opportunities include providing cooking lessons and community supported agriculture in community gardens. One participant felt that there is an opportunity to share the perspective that “health is the foundation of all the other issues and is a priority.”

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants felt that it is a challenge to define performance. They wanted to know if there would be coaching and intensive support, and they expressed a need for tools and resources to meet performance measures. One participant said that “economic opportunity challenges and measuring outcomes are very different from community to community and solutions should consider different approaches.” Another challenge lies in finding “clear direction with the ability to build independent programs. Clear guidelines that fit within my community. Financial resources and support not criticism and better tools to monitor the impact and the demographics and the community.”

Opportunities

There is an opportunity for “virtual civic engagement providing accessible ways to do

service.” There are also opportunities to encourage communication among grantees and run pilot programs and data collection. Participants expressed a desire for “more opportunity to join forces around issues such as helping connect grantees from different streams in a geographical region to work together.” Other participants felt there were opportunities to increase partnerships with community development organizations and grantees. There is also a desire for a “clear definition of what the priorities are at CNCS within the four priorities for programs to determine if they fit in with CNCS.”

Clean Energy

Challenges

Challenges in clean energy include a lack of common metrics, people who do not know how to locate resources, programs that have dual goals, and people who do not believe in global warming. Another challenge is that different states have different needs and problems related to clean energy, and participants suggested that some issues need to be reframed so that everyone can understand them.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to help energy audit programs with outreach, reframe the issue, offer states a few successful models, and engage the EPA and other partners. Participants also felt that the disaster in the Gulf “makes this something that people may pay more attention to now and it is “extremely visible for public education.”

Veterans

Challenges

Challenges in the veterans focus area include health care needs, reintegration challenges, young veterans with families trying to survive on a small stipend, and getting veterans involved in national service. There are also challenges around veterans who need resources to get jobs and veterans with disabilities that need to be served. Participants suggested that there is a lack of understanding by CNCS of the impact of the variety of things RSVP can help veterans with, such as taking them to medical facilities. Furthermore, RSVP needs a way to let CNCS know how many veterans are serving.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to build relationships with veterans associations and connect with non-profit organizations that “have had success in working with and supporting veterans.” There is also an opportunity to provide training and technical assistance to those non-profits that are serving veterans. Participants noted that an opportunity lies in encouraging veterans to serve who already have an ethic of service and then measuring the number of veterans who are engaged in the community.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

None mentioned.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity for “communities [to] have defined role[s] for volunteers in disaster.”

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Vicksburg, Mississippi on July 8.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

In the education focus area, participants felt that success would include increasing grade level performance and high school graduation rates, increasing early childhood reading skills and comprehension, and encouraging students to pursue post-graduate work through college or vocational preparation.

Healthy Futures

Participant felt that success in healthy futures would be increased knowledge of healthy eating, shopping on a budget, and healthy lifestyles.

Opportunity

In the opportunity focus area, participants felt that success would include developing skills through apprenticeship programs and improv-

ing employment opportunities.

Clean Energy

Participants felt that success in clean energy would mean that “residents, citizens and communities understand and commit to serve as responsible stewards in everyday life,” by putting recycling bins everywhere, for example. In addition, success is when “clean energy/environmentally sensitive practices become second nature and routine.” Examples of these practices include recycling, using non-motorized transportation, renewable resources and energy initiatives, and water conservation.

Veterans

Success in the veterans priority area would be helping veterans readjust to life in the U.S., as well as advocating for programs for active and retired military families on and off base, including the Coast Guard, National Guard, and reserves. Participants also mentioned the need to notify veterans about the opportunities and benefits available to them, as well as targeting programming and resources to youth in military families since they are often overlooked.

Disaster Preparedness

Participants felt that success in disaster preparedness would mean that communities have a unified, coordinated plan and proper training so that the community is able to immediately respond to a disaster. In addition, youth would

be prepared to respond and groups that are not uniquely service-oriented know their roles in the plan (for example, the public bus system).

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education, participants believe that other indicators of success would be increased parent and community involvement in school, improvements in student self-esteem, and the retention of good teachers. In the opportunity focus area, participants felt that the objectives are limited and suggested broadening the key objectives and then tailoring them to each community: “Further definition with metrics will limit what we are capable of doing.” They also suggested increasing opportunities for baby boomers, the retention of partner organizations, and a new understanding of volunteering beyond “sweat equity.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants suggested that challenges in education include poor reading comprehension; this negatively impacts student performance and is a student, parent, and community concern. In addition, nobody is asking schools to make changes and “schools that need grants the most do not have staff and capacity to do the paperwork and manage the grant.” Participants also felt that students must be excited and want to learn, and that good teachers need to be rewarded.

Opportunities

Opportunities include student and community-wide mentoring, contextual learning, and setting standards for tutors that include accountability and outcomes measures. Participants also felt that there is an opportunity to “utilize schools during summers as ‘learning centers’ where students can focus on specific areas of deficiency.”

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants felt that challenges in healthy futures include transportation barriers, distrust of

public agencies, and a community's history.

Opportunities

In healthy futures, there is an opportunity to review and revise school and public agencies' food policies. Volunteers can provide motivation and education on nutrition and healthy lifestyles, as well as teach parents to model healthy lifestyles and eat healthy on a budget.

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants mentioned logistical challenges including transportation and housing, especially for people with disabilities, and the need for safe, affordable child care. As one participant said, "the target population can only embrace opportunity if safe, affordable child care is part of the plan." They also felt that the match requirement is a critical challenge for programs and that it could be a reason that small organizations are not able to partner. One participant suggested that "a cost share reduction would allow those of us on the ground to serve along with you."

Opportunities

None mentioned.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Participants felt that communicating the "why" to target audiences is a huge challenge.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to "educate commu-

nity leaders (elected officials, business leaders, civic organizations, religious institutions etc.) to set goals and desired futures for what we want our communities to become." Participants also cited the opportunity to utilize youth and engage both young people and other leaders in order to assure success. Finally, participants mentioned specific opportunities such as wind power in flood lands and hydro power off the Mississippi River.

Veterans

Challenges

Participants cited a need for "policy changes that level the playing field to secure funding and support for youth programs." In addition, community organizations are often unable to get through red tape. One participant felt that there are too many veterans placed in government jobs who are marginally qualified, and that we need to better enable them to succeed. Another felt that "veterans are given information when they are young" but that they need it when they are older.

Opportunities

Participants felt there is an opportunity to perfect programs, document the programs using technology, and market the programs using social media. Volunteers can help spread the word. In addition, participants felt that military children are a great target audience.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Challenges in disaster preparedness include

lack of communication and understanding of the disaster plan and roles, as well as insufficient infrastructure development at the local, state, and regional levels. In addition, participants suggested that sometimes people are territorial and not willing to work together.

Opportunities

Participants felt that people are willing to volunteer and that FEMA, NEMA, and the Red Cross are available and willing to help. One participant suggested that there is an opportunity to set up a statewide network of who is needed and who is available to help.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in San Antonio, Texas on July 9.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Multiple participants suggested that success would include providing more mentors so that “students have someone to encourage them in a positive way towards education.” Participants also wanted to see more graduating students go to college or technical school. To make these two options a reality, participants suggested that there needs to be more college readiness and technical training programs as well as higher expectations and accountability for college and career readiness. In addition, participants would like to see workforce development programs in high schools for those that choose to go directly to work. Participants felt that success would also include more family and parental involvement in schools, particularly volunteer opportunities. Finally, participants would like to see more service-learning em-

bedded in schools at all grade levels.

Healthy Futures

In order to meet the proposed key objectives, participants would like to see “older Americans involved in the community” as mentors, tutors, or friends “who influence healthy choices.” Participants felt that success would also include an increase in independent living for seniors. They suggested that tracking the success of programs and sharing trending information is also important; as one participant noted, “I can see success in five years with the tracking and trending of program impact[s] on youth, families, and communities.”

Opportunity

Participants frequently mentioned the three proposed objectives in the opportunity focus area. They emphasized the need for job training programs, including helping “applicants understand requirements/benefits of job categories and understand funds needed to support self and families.” Participants suggested that job training programs should be “created at the local level supported and brought to scale with CNCS support.” In addition, participants would like to see “a seamless continuum of care with multiple points of entry leading to sustainable employment on a mutually agreed upon career ladder.” They felt that success would also include more people using traditional banking services rather than payday lenders and title

loan companies, and a “clear organization of community resources.”

Clean Energy

Participants felt that success in clean energy would include an “increase in the number of volunteers, resources and training within this field.” With the additional resources, participants would like to create a “culture of environmental awareness where recycling, conservation are defaults.” In addition, they felt that success would involve quantified goals and an effort to “connect clean energy as a baseline to all other goals and other focus areas.”

Veterans

Participants suggested that success would include engaging veterans who are returning from duty as well as supporting “neglected and discarded” veterans.

Disaster Preparedness

Participants felt that success in disaster preparedness would include a “successful and complete volunteer database – and contents to all major first responder groups” as a way to increase the capacity of at-risk communities. In addition, they noted the need for training for direct service, continuous programming, and an increase in “able and trained volunteers.”

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives in the education, clean energy, and veterans focus areas beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education participants wanted to see more students do service and also be prepared for college. In clean energy participants wanted to “see environmental conservation as important as clean energy.” The veterans discussion focused on helping and engaging recent and “old time vets.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants felt that challenges in education include “educating legislators about the positive impact of service as a solution.” Another participant felt that we “need more knowledge of service programs and their impact.” Additional challenges include peer to peer mentoring, getting parents involved in their child’s academic life, and the “need to find a way to support the infrastructures of non-profit orgs striving to serve in this area by deploying volunteers.” Another challenge is the lack of

funding in schools and the need to be strategic about the resources that are deployed “to ensure impact for the agencies and population being served.” Participants also suggested that it was a challenge to overcome resistance to change in formal institutions and apathy toward school success. Participants felt that there is a need to coordinate and leverage partnerships between private and public entities such as school districts, businesses, non-profits, and communities. Finally, participants suggested that there is also a “lack of service infrastructure,” and a “lack of definitive research that will convince administrators/ parents/ community of the benefits of service learning.”

Opportunities

Participants felt that there is an opportunity to build mentoring relationships, especially capitalizing on seniors acting as mentors. There is also an opportunity to implement a “place-based approach” which “holds great potential to confront concentrated problems.” Participants suggested that there is an opportunity to engage students in service and develop a commitment to service among youth, which leads to “greater college preparedness and civic engagement in the next generation.” Finally, there are opportunities to collaborate, which would “bring various skill sets together in a successful way” and to leverage technology “for public information/education/engagement purposes.”

Healthy Futures

Challenges

It is a challenge to empower communities to change and to learn healthy behaviors and embrace healthy lifestyles. One participant suggested that obesity is a “lifestyle/cultural issue,” and to see change you need to work with parents and grandparents so they offer healthy foods. Another participant suggested that a challenge lies in “creating a space for healthy futures in ‘our’ lifestyle, integrating services within current lifestyles” since we live in a “culture of excess.” It is also a challenge to shift to a focus on physical activity.

Opportunities

Participants felt that there are opportunities to involve youth, add more volunteer programs, have the media focus on obesity, and “seize this opportunity to use all for service.”

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants felt that challenges in the opportunity focus area include “tracking the results annually to determine the effectiveness of these programs,” and “dealing with cultural issues so that individuals feel comfortable to learn and tackle new industries and job potentials.” It is also a challenge to provide financial literacy for youth, overcome the “need for ‘any job now’,” and provide adequate child care. Another challenge is a paradigm shift in how Americans work, which increases the value of volunteerism.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to increase access and public awareness, evaluation, and adequate funding and services. Participants felt that there is also an opportunity to strengthen families by addressing financial stresses. There is an opportunity for partnerships with non-profit organizations, community colleges, and small and large businesses. One participant noted that “poverty has been shown to be impacted by the macro issues – it’s not just education or jobs alone that result in poverty. The system is organized in resources and access to those resources which then collectively impact the areas identified by the local community.”

Clean Energy

Challenges

It is a challenge to partner with and provide resources to energy producers “to open an effective dialogue for the use of renewable resources.” Participants also felt that a “culture change” needs to happen so that clean energy is a “default.” They noted that energy saving measurements are “not practical” for every region, and “quality of life must be considered first as it will vary among recipients.”

Opportunities

Participants suggested that there are opportunities to form various collaborations with other federal agencies, youth, and the elderly. There are also opportunities to use service as a gateway to green jobs and to mitigate climate change through public lands projects. In addition, participants felt there are opportunities to

“develop a national knowledge pool of experiences of members in this area of service” and to “assist state and localities to deal with gaps in service caused by cutbacks to parks and public lands.”

Veterans

Challenges

Participants felt it is a challenge to provide a “companion for every vet.”

Opportunities

None mentioned.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Participants felt that it is “difficult to get training to potential volunteers – need more preparation for local responses” and that the “nature of disaster dictates needs – don’t know what you need until disaster strikes.” Other challenges include a “lack of accessible and continuous online education” and that “sometimes organizations in the field are territorial – not willing to work together and have a specific agenda.”

Opportunities

There are opportunities to build capacity, utilize more volunteers effectively, and give access and education credit to other resources such as online training. There is also an opportunity to “improve and utilize services currently available with increased understanding of how to utilize” those services.

HAMILTON, OHIO

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Hamilton, Ohio on July 14.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants placed an emphasis on requiring community service or service-learning for students to graduate from high school. They also proposed to integrate community service or service-learning into all grade levels, as well as to encourage civic engagement after high school. Participants often mentioned closing the achievement gap as a vision of success, as well as students performing on grade level, specifically in reading, writing, and math. Increasing the graduation rate and the rate that students are promoted to the next grade level were also suggested multiple times. Some participants wanted to focus on pre-K and college readiness, while others wanted to focus on birth through college. Success would also include family and community engagement; for example, one participant said that “education is

a community strategy – goes beyond schools. We all play a role in education from birth thru [the] rest of life.”

Healthy Futures

Participants had varying ideas of success in the healthy futures focus area. For example, participants mentioned a desire to “replicate programs which can create a cultural shift,” as well as “school-based programs which meet key nutritional standards.” Another suggestion was to “build a network of ‘healthy lifestyle’ programs that will foster healthier communities,” including physical activity programs, health care and fitness clubs, programs for individuals with disabilities, and nutrition programs. Multiple participants mentioned transportation issues, specifically in rural areas. They also noted the need for more services and funding for the aging population, and the need for seniors to live in their homes longer. Multiple participants mentioned the desire to have more seniors act as volunteers and get trained to lead non-profits.

Opportunity

Participants suggested that financial education could result in a reduction of foreclosures, an increase in stable living situations, and an increase in home ownership. Participants called for collaboration in many areas: among data systems that link employers and employees, among resources and services, among aligned

non-profits, and among non-profits and employers. Programs were suggested that would “build skills of economically vulnerable [people] while incentivizing the work accomplished and developing soft skills.” These programs should teach skills that “fit the job market” and enable people to have a clearer path to employment opportunities that allow them to earn a living wage. Participants felt that a reduction in unemployment and underemployment is important, as is “stabilizing vulnerable populations.” In addition, changes need to be tracked, which will enable CNCS to create a “data set to develop [a] predictive model for future needs.”

Clean Energy

Participants felt that there are multiple measures of success in the clean energy focus area. These include energy reduction for individuals and homeowners, educating families and individuals about “behaviors and opportunities for grants and government incentives,” aligning the “energy and spirit of service and volunteerism behind the national goals of clean energy and the evolving energy economy,” and measuring the number of people who are educated about clean energy and the percentage reduction in fossil fuel consumption.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives in

education and clean energy beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education there was an emphasis on service-learning as a requirement for graduation and also on college readiness programs for students. Much of the clean energy discussion focused on education around clean energy.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants mentioned multiple challenges in the education focus area. One challenge is family and school support. As one participant stated, “what seems to be the understanding of education is what happens in schools. In many ways that is too often the least of it. We need to ensure the whole community including family/businesses/etc is involved – truly.” Family support includes building a “family unit” and “stability in the home,” while school support is related to “getting schools to participate/ collaborate: data, objectives, engagement of staff, students, families,” and “connecting service with student level achievement.” Participants also expressed a desire for various forms of collaboration including the following: between volunteers and schools, between businesses and schools, involving youth program partner-

ships such as 4H, and between college students and non-college students.

Opportunities

Participants felt there were opportunities to create a cycle of service and success, build a complete community, and work toward lifelong service. They also saw opportunities to provide leadership that inspires service, directed at making lasting and impactful change, and to build new partnerships that include businesses, non-profit organizations, and corporations. These goals include the desire to “utilize [the] total community and skill set,” including non-traditional mentors and seniors as volunteers. Multiple participants also wanted to show how service impacts graduation rates and student success.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants suggested that the two primary challenges in healthy futures are the lack of support and funding concerns. Participants feel like they are “trying to do everything for all people,” and they are concerned about sustainability. Needed supports include training on “health issues and the ability to lead training and volunteers,” time to shift into new initiatives, and technology upgrades. Transportation for volunteers, especially youth and seniors, was seen as a challenge. One participant noted that “non-profit and volunteer networks are a key but the infrastructure is not effective,” and there is a need to build partnerships that last “after the initial goals are met.” Participants

believe that there are many groups that are not addressed, such as seniors, older adults, people with chronic diseases, people with disabilities, and people with behavioral health conditions.

Opportunities

Opportunities in healthy futures include partnerships, mentorships, and expanded programming about gardening, nutrition, and obesity. There is also an opportunity to provide increased awareness in communities about “service as a positive force for change and community impact” and to create a “national image of service and volunteerism.”

Opportunity

Challenges

Multiple participants mentioned the need to increase funding for VISTA, as there are not currently “enough resources directed at poverty fighting.” Challenges include bureaucracy, silos, and institutionalization; as one participant said, “bureaucracy blocks innovation.” One participant posed this question: “Why would CNCS only commit 1/6 of its resources to the most important and critical issue of our times? 15.8 million unemployed Americans.” A recurring theme in the discussion was the need for mission-aligned non-profits to collaborate and for capacity to be built in those non-profits. Additional challenges cited by participants include “fear of transition,” child care, transportation, comfort with service, feeling labeled, and “social rules.”

Opportunities

Opportunities exist to “use policy to incentivize employment,” share best practices for “successful models to be implemented in communities,” and to use social innovation to create jobs. Participants mentioned that there is an opportunity to provide an operational framework for community assessments and data collection, and that there is a need to build capacity in communities to measure and evaluate outcomes. This will “allow for a predictive response to workforce development rather than reactive” and help “determine how best to address the needs.” Participants encouraged CNCS to support innovation by breaking down government silos.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Challenges in clean energy include actually changing behavior, reaching people, “communicating the long term financial benefits vs. short-term up front investment,” educating people, and “building the base of volunteers to sustain the message.”

Opportunities

Opportunities in clean energy include forming partnerships between companies and groups that have the same objective instead of creating new programs, reducing energy use and cost, getting schools to involve children in clean energy habits who will in turn encourage their parents, and communicating facts to “remove conflicting messages.”

FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Frankfort, Kentucky on July 14.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants felt that success in the education focus area would include a significant increase in graduation rates, as well as greater emphasis on college preparedness and/or workforce readiness and financial literacy for high school students. Many participants felt that success would involve various types of collaboration: intergenerational cooperation and collaboration, increased collaboration with the Department of Education so that AmeriCorps is an integral part of the Department's strategic plan, increased connectivity among organizations hosting and leading service, increased collaboration between national service programs, and alignment and collaboration with government, education non-profits, and other service groups to increase graduation rates and improve reading levels. Participants also suggested that

success would mean more skill-based service opportunities, i.e., "educating by the educated," and that success should incorporate safety and awareness of community services.

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would include a focus on prevention and early skills, as well as concrete "programs in a box" that can be broadly implemented for issues like obesity. Participants also felt that success would mean more CNCS programs "moving and working together," different senior programs meeting and interacting on a regular basis, the coordination of community collaborations and access to services, and community non-profits aligning their resources to achieve the national strategic plan objectives as they apply in each community.

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity area would include "service that empowers members and volunteers to careers important to economic thriving of communities," and communities and individuals recognizing and understanding that service and working in non-profits is an entry into employment for the unemployed and underemployed. Success would also mean that underserved populations are aware of and offered service opportunities that are valued throughout the community, all people with disabilities have the opportunity to serve their

communities, and “all levels of society recognize the necessity of service for a highly successful community.” Participants also felt that success would include the elimination of chronic homelessness, cross-stream collaboration, and clear data for benchmarking successes, challenges, and failures.

Clean Energy

Success in clean energy would be “a broad definition of clean energy initiatives that includes a variety of approaches, including local food, residential energy usage reduction, and increased public transport,” as well as the ability for small, grassroots non-profits to engage in this initiative since AmeriCorps State is too cost-intensive for small organizations.

Veterans

Success in the veterans area would include military individuals and families in partnership, increasing mentors in schools to serve military children, and allowing VISTAs to serve on military bases and posts as partners.

Disaster Preparedness

Success in disaster preparedness would include having programs in place in local communities “to help citizens respond and recover in the event of a disaster,” and having people trained to coordinate and run these programs, training regularly and perhaps training others in the community through a “train the trainer” model. Success would also include a “statewide strategy for long term recovery that is written and understood by the community for the commu-

nity,” and a system where communities could recover rapidly from disasters with less dependence on external resources.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives in education and healthy futures beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education, participants felt that early childhood education and adult education need to be included in the objectives. One example cited was that an increase in refugee and immigrant populations means that more adults require adult education and ESL. In the healthy futures area, participants felt that the focus on obesity and supporting independent seniors was too narrow, and that additional areas like safety (violence, abuse and neglect) and public safety need to be included. Mental health was also mentioned, specifically supporting families of mentally ill individuals. In addition, one participant felt that it is a “disservice to our communities if our AmeriCorps programs try to fit their program models into these key objectives.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants cited challenges related to turf issues and structural barriers, as well as the need to target CNCS resources in a thoughtful way so that “one branch picks up the children where another ends.” AmeriCorps programs are unable to work together due to regulations, and CNCS needs to provide more flexibility and add more incentives for collaboration. Participants also cited some challenges within CNCS programs, such as knowing where Senior programs such as RSVP can fit in or dealing with the rapid influx of new members. Another challenge is that “measuring long-term impact is virtually impossible with short-term funding,” and one participant suggested that longer grant cycles would help partners and programs better plan for long-term success for students. Additional challenges lie within the education system itself, such as limited access to assessment and test scores and the need to help teachers effectively use volunteer help. Finally, one participant commented on the challenge in recognizing the overlap among these focus areas: “better employment depends on continuing education, better quality of life for older Americans depends on life long learn-

ing experiences.”

Opportunities

Participants cited many opportunities for collaboration and felt that there was an opportunity to “become more cohesive and strategic in our approach.” Examples included collaboration with other programs to maximize the effects of service, collaboration across all streams of service, removing regulations that “prevent us from working together,” and development of a database of all resources and agencies to share with all programs. Some comments addressed particular kinds of CNCS programs; for example, placing AmeriCorps members in public schools, libraries, and adult community centers, utilizing VISTA and AmeriCorps to provide schools with youth safety and awareness options, and using Senior Corps programs to provide stability to service that can make a real impact over the next five years. One participant felt there was an opportunity to begin dialogue with the Kentucky department of education, and another suggested building the capacity of small non-profits to enable them to access volunteer opportunities.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants suggested that VISTAs can play a role in enabling and fostering collaboration, while another comment suggested the challenge of geographical silos and a “turf” mindset. It is a challenge to reach into rural areas, and there is also a lack of centralized leadership to assist non-profits in accessing the

service community. Another participant addressed the different CNCS funding streams and suggested that “we do not want to lose the identity and impact of programs like Senior Corps or Learn and Serve because state and national meet those needs.”

Opportunities

Many of the comments addressed collaboration and partnership. Participants suggested that the desire to collaborate does exist, and that there is an opportunity for CNCS programs to work together. CNCS could serve as a convener of other service groups, and there is an opportunity to encourage non-profits to promote identified national issues. One participant suggested connecting outlying and rural communities with other areas of the state to achieve common objectives since “there are lots of volunteers going in a thousand different directions.” Two comments suggested conducting surveys of non-profits and communities in order to “discover those relationships” and “develop bridges between existing services to meet identified needs.” Participants felt that resources are available within communities, but that there is a need for education and awareness of the services available. There is an opportunity to work in rural areas and schools, and to expand upon existing services to remove barriers such as seniors’ transportation needs.

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants discussed a number of challenges in the opportunity focus area. Multiple partici-

pants raised issues related to better coordination and communication, including a lack of coordination of resources and strategies at the local, state and national level, the need for a clear framework for eliminating unnecessary program overlap and streamlining asset use, and the need for effective communication and asset allocation across silos. Other comments suggested that there was a “challenge in educating the right stakeholders on the value of service” and that the “upper management level doesn’t recognize the valuable contributions of VISTAS and volunteers.” A few comments addressed challenges related to the service experience, such as inadequate training, a lack of continuity and sustainability for service participants, transportation issues in Appalachia and rural areas, and that people with disabilities fear they will lose their disability benefits if they participate in service. One participant suggested that non-profits need to build capacity in the areas of fundraising and development, while another felt that the cost of service needs to be reduced. Finally, participants mentioned that “nuances among groups [refugees and immigrants] must be understood to ensure we can effectively reach them,” and that we “need a baseline understanding of where we are currently having impact and what communities we are missing” in order to develop plans for the future.

Opportunities

Participants suggested that there was an opportunity to place members in new areas outside of non-profits, such as government,

local communities, and education departments. One example given was to coordinate CNCS's strategy with the national strategy of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. In addition, there is an opportunity for collaboration between for-profit and non-profits, and the Serve America Act authorizes resources for capacity-building.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Participants expressed challenges related to “the wealth, power and political influence of energy companies and producers” as well as the cost of clean energy. Another challenge is “the limitations of political action in national service – which is something almost [always] required for addressing this initiative.”

Opportunities

Participants cited on-the-ground opportunities like community gardens that can impact energy at a grassroots level, as well as growing public interest in these kinds of initiatives.

Veterans

Challenges

In the veterans focus area, participants discussed challenges related to protocols and logistics. For examples, participants expressed that it is a challenge to get through post gate security and that CNCS needs to assist programs with coordination so that VISTAs can serve on post. In addition, one participant noted limited access to computers on base for AmeriCorps members.

Opportunities

Participants felt that having members serve with veterans service organizations was an opportunity in this area, as well as involving veterans as both members and as beneficiaries.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Participants expressed challenges related to maintaining local interest in disaster preparedness during non-disaster times. Another challenge is recruiting and retaining volunteers, and having local community members become leaders for community preparedness. Participants also cited the challenge of coordinating various disaster programs to work together and the need to standardize training and education programs.

Opportunities

Participants felt that community members could find gratification from their service in disaster preparedness, and once trained they were always trained so that communities would be prepared before a disaster hit.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Memphis, Tennessee on July 15.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants felt that success in education would include a structure for non-profits and schools to align services and collaborate.

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would include decreased obesity rates, as well as greater access to fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods. In addition, participants felt that volunteers would “develop, oversee, and sustain nutritious food sources for poor and under-resourced people,” as well as sustain safe locations for play and exercise. These volunteers would include trained, skilled retirees. Success would also mean having a strong infrastructure that unites existing, knowledgeable organizations.

Opportunity

Participants felt that CNCS should “leverage its base of service workers to build the capacity of agencies and programs that provide job skills training, work readiness, and education.” One idea is to have VISTAs recruit volunteers to teach skills to at-risk populations, such as graphic design, electrical, and medical skills. In addition, participants felt that success would also include intentional skill development of CNCS volunteers so that they are more marketable.

Clean Energy

Success in clean energy would mean that “service programs lead to increased home efficiency and increased conservation in communities and homes,” and public education would mean that more Americans understand the importance of clean energy. Participants also suggested that AmeriCorps members would facilitate green home improvements and work with businesses to do LEED architectural improvements.

Veterans

Success in the veterans focus area would mean that veterans are employed, receive appropriate benefits, have save, affordable housing, and are involved as volunteer leaders.

Disaster Preparedness

Success in disaster preparedness would mean

that volunteers are available for direct response, AmeriCorps works with VOADS, and there is a plan for spontaneous volunteers after a disaster. In addition, participants suggested that VISTA members be required to receive disaster training and develop a personal disaster kit, and that VISTAs build the capacity of communities to respond to disasters through community disaster education programs and public awareness.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education, these should include increased parental involvement and education, a focus on life skills, required service-learning from kindergarten through college, and expanded pre-K education and post-secondary attainment (in addition to increased high school graduation rates). In healthy futures, a participant suggested that the “key objectives should include addressing hunger as it impacts obesity and improving quality of life for children.” In clean energy, participants suggested that success would include university partnerships involving transportation surveys, greenway planning, bicycle and public transportation advocacy and planning. Another suggestion was developing education programs centered around alternative energy technology so that students graduate high school informed, interested, and engaged

in green fields. Finally, participants suggested that clean energy was too limiting and that conservation should be another focus because it incorporates strategies that people can tackle on their own.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

One participant suggested that VISTA would be more sustainable if the stipends included a graduated increase for multiple years of service.

Opportunities

Participants cited opportunities for service-learning, including working “with the Department of Education, teacher licensing bodies, universities, etc. to promote service-learning training in all teaching methodology curriculums.” Similarly, the “Holy Grail of Service Learning is the inclusion of service learning coursework as a requirement of K-12 teacher certification. Higher education teacher preparation programs should include quality coursework in service learning methodology appropriate for a teacher candidate’s expected grade level.” Another opportunity is 3-5 year funding that could “build a sustainable infrastructure

for alignment and collaboration among pre-k to college/adult education institutions and non-profit/local government and business partners.”

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Challenges in healthy futures include the need for organizational training and infrastructure development resources, as well as resources to engage younger volunteers and enable them to work with aging volunteers. Participants also cited challenges related to crime, poor education, and factors in the environment and public policy that can preclude success.

Opportunities

Participants cited opportunities to use skilled retirees as well as engage neighborhood residents. Other suggestions include creating a model infrastructure, cohesive neighborhoods, and opportunities for physical activities for families. One participant felt that there is an opportunity to place the appropriate resources, training, and support in such a way that volunteers “can be effectively coordinated and make the necessary difference.”

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants cited challenges related to access to opportunities, as well as at-risk populations in need of skills development and job readiness.

Opportunities

Participants felt that there was an opportunity

to utilize CNCS support “in developing a centralized, searchable registry of agencies and non-profits to connect groups that can have a synergy by working together.” Participants also suggested connecting to existing resources and taking advantage of local knowledge and local resources to identify organizations that could receive CNCS grants. As one participant stated, “Target job development programs for CNCS grants by mobilizing local knowledge to identify the local organizations best suited to increase job opportunities.” Additional opportunities exist to engage potential job providers and skill developers as CNCS partners and to advocate for the growing role of technology in employment and education.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Participants felt that acceptance of clean energy is a problem because people do not perceive reduced energy consumption to be in their self-interest. Another challenge specific to Memphis is that it is “car-oriented” and lacks public transportation.

Opportunities

There are many opportunities to educate youth, home owners, and businesses, as well as engage school-based programs through Learn and Serve. One participant suggested partnering with utility companies to reduce energy usage, and another suggested that CNCS could do a neighborhood demonstration project, i.e., an in-depth energy improvement “plunge” with solar panels, weatherization, etc. to see what is

required to do it elsewhere.

Veterans

Challenges

Participants suggested that it was a challenge to reach all veterans to educate them about benefits and opportunities because agencies are understaffed. In addition, paperwork and claims take a very long time when veterans do not have all their military records, and getting the records may be difficult. Finally, participants cited a lack of low cost, safe housing.

Opportunities

Participants felt that volunteers could assist with community outreach and that there is an opportunity to engage people in service-learning to support veterans.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Participants felt there was a lack of community partners and resources, as well as a lack of awareness and recognition of the importance of preparedness. Another challenge is building depth within volunteer programs with adequate infrastructure and relationships with community groups. Participants also cited challenges related to sustaining disaster volunteers and keeping up energy and excitement in non-disaster times.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to reach out to organizations and individuals in the community in a more comprehensive or focused way, better

coordinate with disaster response organizations, and improve public messaging on basic preparedness and safety mindedness. Disaster preparedness presents an opportunity to engage AmeriCorps members in meaningful service, results in a better prepared community, saves lives, and alleviates stress on first responders and systems. Finally, participants noted that Memphis is a high risk disaster zone, and that AmeriCorps resources would help prepare the community to respond and recover.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Los Angeles, California on July 19.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Healthy Futures

Participants felt that success in healthy futures would include higher quality of life for older Americans with improved in-home services, and more seniors living independently rather than moving to an institution. Improved quality of life would mean less loneliness, more social interaction, care that addresses psychosocial health needs, and ethnic/racial inclusion of underserved populations. Success in healthy futures would also include reduced obesity rates.

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would include lower prison populations, increased opportunities for meaningful work, stronger and healthier communities, and a lower dropout

rate. Participants also suggested that success would include increased financial literacy, an increase in affordable housing and employment/job training programs for low-income communities, more English classes for immigrants, more programs for youth employment, and expanded programs to train and provide assistance to small business entrepreneurs. One participant felt that increasing mentoring and service opportunities for vulnerable populations would increase economic opportunity.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives in healthy futures and opportunity beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. One participant asked how CNCS would define obesity and which were the correct health measure to focus on (blood pressure, fat percentage, preventative care, etc.). Another suggested that success would include increasing cultural awareness and understanding of service as a solution amongst different communities. Participants felt that success would include better educated, engaged, and responsive communities, an increase in funding available to social service organizations, increased civic engagement and volunteerism, and an increase in government/local elected official support.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Challenges in healthy futures include cultural barriers and stigmas in the target population, diversity of the community, costs, and the fact that “healthy and fresh food [is] not always readily available in the underserved communities where there is a large population of seniors.” Inertia is another challenge, as is communicating and spreading awareness. One participant noted that it is a challenge to estimate the change in people’s attitudes; others felt that sustainability was a challenge and one participant suggesting using two-year volunteers.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to both empower individuals and engage new partners, such as small non-profits that go unnoticed. There is also an opportunity for programs that are localized, place-based, and community-centric. Finally, one participant suggested that a “holistic approach” to service was needed.

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants noted challenges related to finan-

cial literacy and a lack of financial planning, as well as a greed-oriented culture that values instant gratification. The economic downturn and the decline in jobs is also a key challenge. As one participant noted, “that is largely out of the scope of this process, but steps that assist people in surviving this economic downturn are important.” Other challenges include language barriers in immigrant communities and the diversity of neighborhoods. Participants also felt that there is a lack of resources and a lack of agency collaboration, and that the overwhelming amount of choices and services presents a challenge for coordinating opportunities between many organizations. Additional challenges include navigating regulations for business development, needing more manpower for close coaching of each individual household, and the need to increase the level of dialogue between generations.

Opportunities

A number of people are looking to volunteer, and there is an opportunity to promote a sense of civic responsibility and service. There is also an opportunity to share best practices among CBOs, as well as “multigenerational dialogue and multicultural collaboration.” Participants also noted opportunities for leadership and the labor force in low-income areas. There is also an opportunity to provide coaching in the early years in order to build the right habits and perspectives. In terms of specific opportunities, participants suggested English language classes and tutors, outreach to Asian Pacific Islander communities and volunteers

who can speak API languages, small business assistance and training, financial literacy, development (land, structures, etc.), recruitment in North Hills, CA, and programs that help youth obtain job skills and experience. Finally, one participant noted that there is an opportunity to join “many volunteer organizations and services with local political and civic community leaders for effective allocation and distribution of services.”

SAN BERNADINO, CALIFORNIA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in San Bernadino, California on July 20.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants felt that success in the education focus area would mean an increase in graduation rates as a result of more volunteers getting involved in mentoring and tutoring programs. It would also mean that “a culture of higher education has been established” and that we have “a more prominent college going culture with kids that are ready for college and career bound.” Success would also include greater support for technical fields such as math, science, and technology. Programs would develop a formal plan for deploying volunteers at a school site so that volunteers are welcomed, and these volunteer opportunities would have the potential to impact the academic and school site environment. Participants also suggested mentoring and supplemental training for

parents in addition to the mentoring and tutoring for students. One participant suggested parents mentoring other parents, starting at the pre-school level. Success would mean “more students, parents and community members understanding what it takes to succeed.”

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would mean that “more vulnerable seniors are able to remain living independently in their own home[s], with some assistance provided by local programs utilizing volunteers.” In addition, local resources will be well promoted and easy to access, and seniors and people with disabilities will have a network of services they can call upon to meet their needs. Volunteers could assist seniors with transportation, shopping, and personal affairs (paperwork, banking) and could provide visits and friendly phone calls. Participants also suggested more intergenerational activities; for example, children and seniors joining together in recreational activities. Participants felt that success would also mean lower obesity rates, consistent nutritional information, and food education on nutrition and food production methods. One participant suggested that an organic garden be put in every American home.

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would mean “increased accessibility to job training,

financial literacy, affordable housing” and stable employment for more people. This could also include a focus on volunteering as a way to gain access to jobs. One participant noted that CNCS grants could go to areas of high unemployment rather than the current emphasis on an even distribution of grants by state or region.

Clean Energy

Participants felt that success in clean energy would include educating citizens from children to seniors about the importance of conserving energy, as well as having more students involved in implementing clean energy programs. Because of energy conservation, there would be less pollution, cleaner air, cleaner cities, and less traffic. One way to conserve energy is to encourage even the small actions such as unplugging a cell phone or turning off the computer.

Disaster Preparedness

Success in disaster preparedness would include seniors going out and performing presentations, and using existing groups such as inmates that are already trained. In addition, programs would identify the needs of populations in specific areas and address issues such as language barriers and disabilities.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants primarily discussed the key objectives, but they also mentioned a few additional objectives in the education and opportunity focus areas. In education, one participant suggested that teaching should be promoted as a career. Success in the opportunity focus area would also mean creating sustainable communities and self-sufficient communities with job training and support.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Challenges in education include “getting students, parents, teachers and administrators to embrace change” as well as the need to place more responsibility on students to understand what is expected of them. Other challenges include resources, poverty, and language barriers. Participants noted challenges associated with volunteering, such as finding the right volunteers to fill the gaps, finding dedicated volunteers to work within the school community, and finding a way to get CNCS and other organizations to plan together and integrate their

activities. Finally, it was noted that the current impact of service programs is not significant in changing graduation rates.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to get at the root of the problem; the knowledge is there, and we just need to find people who can implement strategies. Participants felt that there is also an opportunity to work with the business community to improve outcomes. The number of available and interested parents and senior volunteers also presents an opportunity.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants suggested that it is a challenge to convince seniors to accept help. Other barriers include crime rates, cost, cultural and age bias, liability issues, and transportation for seniors who are unable to drive. Participants also suggested that it is a challenge to get volunteers, especially in remote areas. In terms of obesity, it is a challenge to change unhealthy patterns and break unhealthy habits “which have been passed from one generation to another and are seen as ‘tradition’.”

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to increase transportation for seniors, as well as provide assistance for seniors who cannot advocate on their own behalf. Participants felt that there are opportunities to provide nutrition education at an early age, which would help establish new lifestyles. There is also an opportunity to take advantage

of free recreational activities for children and seniors, and to provide grants to build and maintain swimming pools and develop community gardens. A related suggestion was to provide grants for people to grow their own gardens at home, perhaps by collaborating with businesses to provide supplies. Participants felt there is an opportunity to provide cooking and gardening classes for low-income families and neighborhood groups, as well as nutrition education for senior groups.

Opportunity

Challenges

It is a challenge to get more organizations to realize the value of volunteer action and partnership and to build and strengthen partnerships between different entities (non-profits, businesses, and government agencies). It is also a challenge to create community buy-in and to “work with individual neighborhoods to build a sense of community and ownership.” One participant noted that “AmeriCorps members are temporary (even though their capacity building is supposed to be sustainable) and there are not always people to fill in the void.” Another felt that it is very difficult for Learn and Serve grants to address affordable housing or impact affordability, especially in California. Given the amount of money CNCS typically grants and the two-to-three year timeframe for a grant, they would have much stronger results if they focused on safe housing.

Opportunities

There are opportunities for increased access

and public awareness, as well as provision of adequate services. Participants felt they could strengthen families by addressing financial stresses and affect generational change through financial training. There is also an opportunity to provide VISTAs with more training “in how to build capacity; community organizing, collaboration, how to involve and engage the communities.” Finally, a participant noted that there is an opportunity for partnerships with non-profits, community colleges, and small and large businesses.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Challenges in clean energy include acceptance of the new lifestyle and the fact that people may not see the importance of clean energy. Other challenges include the initial higher cost of the new technology; for example, people may not be able to purchase an energy efficient car.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to educate children, youth, adults and seniors; children will insist on behavior change with their parents, and this could create and support a new generation of clean energy advocates. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with schools, community centers, and local organizations, build upon existing youth corps, and use advertising and viral marketing that is spread among students.

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

It is a challenge to coordinate between different agencies that do not communicate and have big egos. Other challenges include language barriers and seniors who are not aware of disaster preparedness. Finally, it is a challenge to define the roles for CNCS programming to address the biggest disaster-related needs.

Opportunities

Participants suggested that former inmates and offenders could be utilized in disaster response, including responding to wild fires. There is an opportunity for effective volunteer coordination during disasters and to build specific roles for all CNCS members to plug into with specific disaster agencies. Finally, there is an opportunity to educate vulnerable populations to ensure that their needs are met before, during, and after disasters.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 28.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Multiple participants want to see an increase in the high school graduation rate, specifically to 80% or 85%, and an increase on PISA, TIMS, and STEM test scores. Participants felt that success would also include increasing the rate of graduates who go on to higher education, as well as mentoring programs so that children “have a caring adult to help coach and guide them through their educational pursuits.” In addition, participants suggested infusing service into the curriculum and into graduation criteria and providing training and support for those who are volunteering.

Healthy Futures

In the healthy futures focus area, participants felt that success would include “creat[ing] a

sense of social connections in neighborhoods to promote wellness,” specifically intergenerational connections between children and seniors. Many participants would like to see opportunities for isolated seniors “to gain access to the healthcare; mental, physical and nutrition.” In terms of reducing obesity, participants suggested that there is an opportunity to “create a culture of activity for families, and a culture of eating well.” Participants would also like to see a definition and an easy way to measure “quality of life.”

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would include “service opportunities [that] provide individuals with skills/experience necessary to gain employment after AmeriCorps.” Participants would also like to see more opportunities for employment where people can earn the living wage, especially for the “nearly 25% of Philadelphia citizens who live at, near, or below the poverty level.” In addition, success would include more financial education and tax preparation classes.

Clean Energy

Participants felt that success in the clean energy focus area would include “a greater sense of community awareness to the importance of being a good environmental steward,” as well as “significantly reduced energy use in homes, commercial buildings and public build-

ings.” Participants felt that this could be accomplished via “youth education, community education, direct service—simple measures, behavioral change and non-profits.” Clean energy should become a coordinated “element of all streams of service.”

Veterans

Success in the veterans focus area would include more veterans who serve and more veterans acting as mentors to other veterans. Veterans as service members would “tone down animosity for Vet’s transition – Vets go from military to National Service,” “help Vets feel part of the community,” and hopefully lead to paying civilian jobs.

Disaster Preparedness

Participants felt that success would include greater linkages to Senior Corps as well as protocols, procedures, and a framework for clear alignment with FEMA and VOAD. Additional measures of success are ongoing engagement of volunteers and additional volunteer development and training.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

In clean energy, participants called for a broader focus than just reducing energy consumption. Additional suggested objectives include community awareness, clean-up, and innovation in the environmental field. The

discussion in the veterans focus area centered more on veterans acting as volunteers than it did on increasing economic opportunity. The discussion about disaster preparedness focused primarily on collaborations and linkages to various groups rather than the two proposed key objectives.

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants said that one challenge in education is a lack of mentors “because we let them get away before recruiting them.” A related challenge is a lack of funds to pay and train mentors. Lack of funding also results in the inability to align school districts and the community, and to “manage them with the same objective—working departments.” Another challenge is the need for more teacher training and oversight in order to understand challenges facing students and to understand what works and what doesn’t. Finally, participants felt that there is a lack of effective management tools at all levels of education and also a lack of parental commitment.

Opportunities

Participants felt that there is an opportunity to

bring “young adults originally from the neighborhoods to create positive role models and a source of stability for elementary and middle school students.” An opportunity exists for “young people who can use national service programs to leverage successful post-secondary options.” In addition, there is a desire to develop more public and private partnerships to provide “new thoughts, resources and opportunities to serve” and an opportunity to build on the public and corporate “momentum to serve.” There are also opportunities for service in traditionally underserved after-school programs and academic programs.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Participants felt there are challenges in terms of “turf issues” and a lack of collaboration because of silos. There are also barriers to the “complex and seemingly overwhelming” needs related to healthy futures, including language access, cultural issues, insufficient funding, gaining the trust of isolated seniors and their caregivers, and the need to train staff that may be set in their ways.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to use the growing senior population as a resource, specifically as service members. Participants believe there is an opportunity to bring healthcare costs down and funnel those savings into programs tackling health issues. Another opportunity exists to mobilize diverse individuals, families, and schools to engage in “health-promoting well-

ness” and to address good nutrition.

Opportunity

Challenges

Participants believe that one challenge is a “lack of appropriate and effective management of volunteers,” resulting in the need for a “major investment” in volunteer management and AmeriCorps/VISTA. Similarly, participants felt that it is a challenge to “contextualize the role of service personnel as to the short, mid, long-term goals for the community served.” Participants believe that it is “difficult to make long-term impact” because institutional change is needed. There is also a need for more technical support, specifically in project management for community leaders.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to provide financial education for youth, build teaching skills through service, and develop corporate partnerships. Participants believe that there is an opportunity to create innovative programs and also identify the service that currently has an impact. Finally, there is an opportunity for AmeriCorps to act as a training program that targets non-traditional volunteers and empowers local residents to serve.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Participants expressed a desire to broaden the clean energy focus area to instead call it “Environmental Stewardship,” as “clean energy implies advocacy and misses other critical

concerns in diverse communities” which could result in people losing interest in participating. Participants also questioned whether the current indicators are the correct ones to measure success, and they suggested that possibly the indicators should expand into low-income communities. In addition, “much more training and skills development [is needed] for AmeriCorps members and leaders in energy efficiency and renewable energy.”

Opportunities

Participants felt that it is a great time to “connect the dots” because markets are growing, employment opportunities are real, and training centers have sprung up all over the country. There is also an opportunity to engage college students and the larger public.

Veterans

Challenges

Challenges in the veterans focus area include the fact that veterans may feel as though they have already served, and it is also “unclear where VA-CNCS would overlap, some issues require specific interventions not endorsed by a national service organization.” Participants also suggested that VFW halls are underserved and that Veteran Affairs needs to be more visible in various areas of need in the community. Another challenge arises because the problems of veterans need to be addressed outside of the hours of 9am – 5pm as that is when help is most needed. Finally, participants suggested that veterans need more education on the services that are available to help them.

Opportunities

Participants felt that “veterans are a great potential resource for volunteers.” In addition, an opportunity exists for “job training, volunteer opportunities, medical and psychiatric services.”

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Challenges in the disaster preparedness focus area include connecting with RSVP members to get them more engaged, the fact that “CNCS doesn’t provide enough funding for grantees to seize opportunities,” the need for more focus, and support for staffing with regards to compliance issues and staff management.

Opportunities

Participants saw an opportunity for volunteer centers to send a message about “do’s and don’ts for people to get involved.” There is also an opportunity to share resources regarding web development, as well as an opportunity to develop close linkages with the CERT and VOAD programs.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Indianapolis, Indiana on August 5.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Success in education would include higher graduation rates, more students performing at grade level, increased reading scores, and higher college/trade school enrollment and completion rates. Multiple participants felt that CNCS should take a holistic approach; for example, one suggested that CNCS take “a more holistic approach to attaining the goals—especially in increasing graduation rates,” while another said that “service can play a role in mentoring and engaging families/communities for a more holistic approach.” Similarly, participants felt that programs should use service members “in programs that address all challenges youth face as they progress toward graduation, not just focused on grades, coursework, etc.” Communities would be engaged and focused on youth succeeding in school, and students would

receive the support and resources that they need to achieve. This could be done through an influx of volunteers providing mentoring, tutoring, after-school programming, and service-learning opportunities. For younger children, programs could focus on family literacy support by providing fun reading programs and tapping the resources in public libraries. Other participants felt that success would include supporting parents, both by educating parents on ways they can support their children’s education and by mentoring parents of at-risk youth in parenting skills. Another measure of success would be the creation of job shadowing programs or incorporating career development into the high school curriculum.

Healthy Futures

Participants felt that success in healthy futures would mean that “all community organizations will have the resources they need to adequately address health and wellness.” This includes clean air, water, and soil, and an adequate affordable supply of food. Success would mean raising community expectations and lifelong learning with the entire community engaged.

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would include using service as a transition point for employment and financial stability and providing programs that assist families through mentorship. Participants suggested both case

management and peer-to-peer mentoring strategies. Multiple comments addressed the need for coordination and collaboration between organizations so that all needs are met and services are not duplicated. This coordination would also include “seamless communication between federal, state, and local entities.”

Clean Energy

Success in clean energy would include more green volunteers, reducing power consumption by 20%, more cities meeting EPA air quality standards, more clean energy via wind and solar, more energy efficiency in buildings, more mass transit, less pollution, more urban farms to reduce wastewater, and lower electric bills. Participants also suggested more green jobs and “education regarding actual energy consumption, effective ways to reduce, benefits of reduction for the individual.”

Veterans

Participants suggested providing education and information to veterans and their families on the benefits available to them. Other measures of success include a veterans re-entry program, special concern for female veterans and families where both parents are in the military, and debriefing spouses and families.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives

in education and healthy futures beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. In education, one participant noted the importance of teaching financial literacy, and another felt that programs could offer technical assistance in the area of teacher professional development. In healthy futures, a participant felt that “an age group that was left out of this objective and is not reflected in any other area is young children. If service isn’t focused on the healthy futures of the youngest members of society, their futures as adults will be at-risk.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Challenges include a diversity of programs and providers and a lack of coordination between them, as well as unclear roles and fragmented systems. Partnerships between schools and community-based organizations can be difficult. Participants felt that it is a challenge to reach kids and families most in need of help and to engage families in student success. It can also be a challenge to find culturally competent and sensitive mentors for parents, and participants noted that mentoring itself is a challenge (doing it well, using established best practices, recruiting and retaining mentors,

making appropriate matches, etc.). Other challenges include disconnected families, a lack of awareness, lack of caring adults, the sense of disconnect between education and a career, and low expectations. Participants also mentioned that it is a challenge to measure and evaluate success at the grassroots level, especially for non-school organizations, and that long-term evaluation (i.e., how do we know if we are increasing graduation rates) is also a challenge.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to provide more support for students and parents outside of school or the school day and have greater impact by working with the entire family. Participants felt that AmeriCorps members could be used to mobilize more volunteers, and that increased volunteerism will increase future family involvement in education. Programs could make opportunities to serve more well known, and consequently make service part of a cultural expectation. Participants felt that “many people are willing to help but don’t know how...Mentoring done well can engage large numbers of volunteers in a service that has a high impact on both the child (mentee) and adult (mentor).” Service can also provide “support for teachers who want to try innovative methods that try to engage students in different ways that may appeal to students’ individual needs and learning styles.” Participants also suggested that there is an opportunity to work with children from 4th through 8th grade so that they stay on track for graduation. Finally, participants noted that there is an opportunity to raise a community’s

expectations.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Challenges in healthy futures include creating the infrastructure and finding qualified volunteers. It is also a challenge to measure outcomes because “health outcomes are often long-term and difficult to measure within the term of a grant – specifically a one year AmeriCorps grant.” One participant also felt that “outsiders are not the best delivery mechanism.”

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to serve the youngest children before they reach school age; as one participant noted, “for children, who are homeless, abused, or at risk because of poor parenting or extreme poverty – supports in the earliest years is essential. If you wait until they are old enough to be helped with academic performance, it is already too late.” There is also an opportunity to develop partnerships between universities and communities, as well as rural programs where corps members could “mobilize around external learning and local wisdom.”

Opportunity

Challenges

Collaboration among organizations—and fewer silos—is a challenge, in part because there are no incentives for collaboration. Participants suggested that there is a need for a strong convener as well as more visibility of com-

munity conveners around volunteer centers and resources. Another challenge is engaging non-traditional volunteers (low-income elderly, veterans) and impoverished individuals in service.

Opportunities

There are opportunities for collaboration and untapped volunteer potential, and participants suggested the opportunity to “encourage shared services/merged organizations in the face of dwindling/changing funding sources.” There is also an opportunity for capacity building and sustainability. Other opportunities include involvement of the for-profit community, empowering stakeholders in the community, and skills development. Finally, participants noted the opportunity for service among all ages, a lifetime of volunteerism from the cradle through Learn and Serve through Senior Corps.

Clean Energy

Challenges

Participants mentioned that political hurdles to cleaner energy present a challenge, as does gaining access to research on energy consumption and energy education programs. It is a challenge to cultivate buy-in, educate the public, and change mindsets toward mass transit and clean energy. Participants mentioned other challenges including resources and funding, the lack of a smart grid, and the need to retrain traditional manufacturing jobs to clean tech.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to utilize volunteers of all ages to teach young people, raise awareness, and weatherize businesses and homes. Participants felt there is an opportunity to work with local non-profits on ways to reduce energy consumption at the neighborhood level and also work with cities and states on efficiency. One participant gave the example of a potential clean-up in Indianapolis: “We have a lot of vacant lots and brown fields – so working with organizations and [the] city on turning brown lots to greener plots.” Service programs could develop educational programs for urban and rural community members and help develop plans for residential and commercial buildings to reduce consumption. One participant suggested that there is an opportunity for job training.

Veterans

Challenges

Challenges include dealing with complex issues. It is also a challenge to serve families and veterans including active duty, reserves, and the National Guard.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to focus on families and their needs, as well as female veterans and dual service families where both parents are in the military.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Rochester, New York on August 5.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE IN FIVE YEARS, AS WELL AS PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS THAT SERVICE CAN TAKE TO MEET THE KEY OBJECTIVES

Education

Participants felt that success in education would include increasing graduation rates and the number of students in Rochester who go on to college in the Rochester area. Education involves academics as well as support for students and their families. Success would include “academic support during school hours and holistic afterschool programming (youth development) resulting in comprehensive advancement in a number of areas (academic improvement, increased social skills, increased self-esteem, etc.)” Service can provide this kind of wrap-around approach to in-school and after-school activities. Participants also suggested applied learning in which students apply knowledge to real-world issues, and meaningful service that integrates school learning with the community.

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would include volunteers acting as leaders to educate people about obesity, and the creation of livable intergenerational communities. Success would also mean greater numbers of people engaged in service and in their communities, as well as more intergenerational activities. One participant noted that “RSVP and Senior Companions are the brilliant ‘service as a solution’ way to make this happen.” Success would also include involving youth from the beginning in planning service.

Opportunity

Participants felt that success in the opportunity focus area would include collaboration, both by using a cohesive, holistic approach to youth development instead of a splintered, partial approach, and by streamlining services and CNCS-driven regional or cross disciplinary meetings and webcasts. Success would also include “multi-disciplinary, intergenerational service teams working on tangible community benefit projects” and “regular gatherings of AmeriCorps grantees to learn, share, and innovate.” Another participant suggested community forums on specific issues and providing information to the community on services available to them. Success would also include using AmeriCorps “as job coaches/mentors for youth with multiple barriers to employment.” Finally, one participant suggested that “the

AmeriCorps model needs to be expanded to target at-risk and troubled populations (i.e. re-entry population, disconnected youth, unemployed people), so that a member service year is not just a brief stint in service, but a training and potential future job placement service.” This model would align populations in need with fields in need, such as nursing, green construction, etc.

Disaster Preparedness

Success would mean a culture of collaboration in advance of, during, and after a disaster, as well as “the development of a community preparedness network of coordinating agencies such as VOAD, Citizen Corps, etc.” It would also include the development of community plans to manage spontaneous volunteers.

THEMES RELATED TO OTHER OBJECTIVES

Participants discussed additional objectives beyond those identified as CNCS key objectives. For example, participants felt that education should be expanded to also include youth development; as one participant noted, “Education should be defined more broadly to allow for maximum impact both nationwide and for specific communities.” They also suggested that success would be broader than graduation rates and grade level performance and would encompass more than a traditional educational focus. This means focusing on many com-

ponents of youth development beyond just education, since youth need social supports, constructive after-school activities, positive adult role models, preventive services, etc. Promoting positive youth development includes “providing young people with services, opportunities and the support of caring adults to develop the skills and attributes to become caring, productive adults.” In addition, “young people are instilled with an ethic of service that carries forward and creates a life-long commitment to their communities.”

THEMES RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE IN THESE AREAS

Education

Challenges

Participants felt that graduation rates are a difficult metric to use, given that multiple factors are involved over long periods of time. They asked what would be a real performance measure within the timeframe of CNCS funding. Similarly, one participant noted that graduation rates are hard to change in five years, therefore intermediate outcomes should be accepted. Participants felt that it would be important to get long-term buy in from school districts or else activities would be perceived as just one more cost. Another challenge is that it is hard to work with other government departments

to coordinate priorities, but joint funding gives the best chance for success. Participants felt that CNCS should collaborate with other federal agencies, such as the Department of Education, for terms, indicators, and an understanding of education, but that non-profits were disconnected and that “systemic frameworks often oppose desired outcomes expected by CNCS.”

Opportunities

In education, there is an opportunity to “harness the enthusiasm and support for service” to engage service participants in communities to provide improved outcomes for youth (in-school, out of school, and to support families). There is also an opportunity to integrate service-learning into federal and state aid to schools and in determining what constitutes education in the 21st century, as well as working with American Indian grantees and state-recognized tribes for service-learning with American Indian students. Participants felt that “we can focus, geographically and programmatically, to produce greater results” and that there is an opportunity for coordinated efforts between CNCS and educational institutions. An additional opportunity exists with faith-based organizations, many of which have the will, interest, staffing, and location that can “make serious impact on our youth.” Finally, participants noted the increase in public awareness of service opportunities and interest in making a difference.

Healthy Futures

Challenges

Challenges in healthy futures include poverty and safety issues, both perception and reality. Some neighborhoods have safety issues, and sometimes it is a matter of working on perception to make people feel comfortable and safe. Another challenge is too many fractured or duplicative efforts.

Opportunities

Participants suggested that one opportunity is the number of older adults, youth, and economically disadvantaged individuals available to serve. In addition, community and faith networks intersect, and all the priority areas have commonalities and related solutions. Another opportunity is Rochester’s commitment and culture of service. Participants encouraged CNCS to look at communities and people who are lower income as an opportunity to provide service. Finally, there is an opportunity to find passions and have people work from what their talents are.

Opportunity

Challenges

It is a challenge to break down splintered silos of service and better coordinate services and resources. There is also a lack of communication between, and knowledge of, other resources (agencies, companies, etc.) that provide similar or complimentary services. One participant suggested that RFPs could require collaborative working groups to apply for funding, or that groups could use an asset-based com-

munity development model to receive funding. If the impact zone combines the community in need of help with the community doing service, then the challenges include recruiting at-risk populations, supporting them, and the need for greater collaboration between CNCS and the community-based organizations that serve at-risk populations. Finally, the resources and innovation to increase employment have been cut back and this presents additional challenges.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to leverage “place-based” institutions (higher education and K-12) to provide neutral convening spaces and facilitators. Participants also felt that there is an opportunity for convening and collaborations, and that there are city and state leadership development resources available. One participant suggested that programs should focus on children and youth as well as adults (i.e., youth employment realities, career path activities, financial literacy, etc.).

Disaster Preparedness

Challenges

Low-income communities lack resources, and collaboration is a challenge because agencies do not cooperate. It is also a challenge to retain volunteers when large-scale disasters do not occur.

Opportunities

Safety training prevents disasters, and preparedness helps people recover faster. In

addition, “addressing or considering needs of vulnerable populations mitigates the larger impacts of disasters.” Participants suggested that there are opportunities to increase the core of volunteers and “set a minimum standard for the percentage of the community that has received information, training and resources on local emergency preparedness.” There is an opportunity to hold conversations between stakeholders in disaster response with the goal of creating a human services disaster plan, as well as “a culture and knowledge of all agency roles in disaster and the implementation of continuity of operations planning.” Finally, participants suggested preparedness in schools so that all children are educated, and that there could be a high school requirement that students are trained in first aid and CPR.

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Cheyenne, Wyoming on August 17.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Several participants mentioned that an increase in high school graduation rates would serve as a measure of success in the education focus area. One suggestion is a collaboration of after-school, K-12, and summer programs to meet the goal of more children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Another idea around collaboration is connecting results that are program-focused in a “pipeline of results.” To achieve these measures of success, participants suggested engaging all people in volunteering by creating a welcoming culture of volunteering and showing real life examples of who is volunteering and the types of projects they are engaged in in order to stimulate interest.

Healthy Futures

In Cheyenne, participants felt that success would include lower health care costs, active people eating healthy meals, and reductions in suicide rates, institutional placements, and elder abuse. Another aspect of success is “increased access to and use of natural areas – state and national parks, for example.” One participant viewed success as “older males getting involved in programs and leading healthy lifestyles.” In terms of programming directions, participants called for health care service providers to travel to people who are unable to get to needed services because they live in frontier or rural areas. Also, there is a need for funding to be targeted to those same populations since it costs more to provide service to frontier and rural areas.

Opportunity

Participants felt that success in the opportunity focus area would include more safe and affordable housing, increased home ownership, “people making self-sufficient wages, doing work that they enjoy and that empowers them,” and the identification of important indicators. In addition, success would be “a marked change in how people volunteer and a proven impact on their communities.” Participants suggested a variety of programming directions, including credit counseling, life skills training, and succession planning within organizations. One participant suggested identifying work-

ing solutions and then promoting them: “such excellent work is being done throughout the country – identify and promote those models and expand results.” Other participants want to “create programs that empower youth to address needs within communities.”

Environmental Stewardship

Participants felt that success in environmental stewardship would include decreased energy consumption, leading to increased savings for families and an attitude shift. Success would also include enhancing community infrastructure such as green spaces and the green belt. Programming directions to reach these goals include energy audits in schools, school and family programming, having service days, and “creating effective domains/dialogue to resolve local energy and environmental needs.”

Veterans

Success would include “veterans and their families living in healthy homes and families.” Participants also felt that success would include programming that finds ways to connect with younger veterans who need social support but do not associate with traditional veteran organizations and thus are not informed of available services. Programming directions in the veterans focus area could include coordinating benefits for men and women leaving the service. In addition, participants recommended taking a “no judgment” approach, i.e., “leave our perceptions behind and accept each person as they present themselves – allow folks to feel welcome and worthy of services and assis-

tance.”

Disaster Services

Participants in Cheyenne stressed that disaster preparedness looks different in a frontier state such as Wyoming. This needs to be considered when defining success, as some communities are isolated and “citizens need to be prepared and able to take care of themselves.” Participants noted the importance of preparing youth to respond, especially when not with their families. This can happen through community youth programs that involve a full scale readiness test. Groups that can be engaged to create youth community readiness programs include 4H, after-school programs, and Junior EMT/CNAs.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Augusta, Georgia on August 23.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Participants felt that success in the education priority area would include students performing at grade level and a community emphasis on showing the importance of volunteering. Fresh approaches in programming could include projects that are “participant based rather than outcome based,” a mentor program for organizations, collaboration among programs/organizations to maximize involvement and impact, and creating a process for local communities to be successful in the grant process.

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would include seniors aging “at home with the help of vol-

unteers.” Also, participants felt that having “effective mentor programs for at-risk children will produce higher test scores, decreased drug use, decreased teen pregnancy and higher graduation rates.” Another vision of success is providing service skills to prisoners so that they can be released back early into society through service. Multiple participants discussed collaborations and partnerships as a fresh approach. Examples include institutions/organizations of higher learning that have launched successful campaigns between foundations and organizations that serve homeless, youth, domestic violence victims, and seniors. Additional programming directions could include healthy cooking shows, self-help programs, community gardens, and promoting aging and wellness in senior facilities.

Opportunity

In the opportunity focus area, participants felt that success would include mixed housing between homeowners and renters, affordable housing, more access to employment, and financial stability for more families. Fresh approaches to solve problems include youth leadership programs, neighborhood associations, having people join credit unions, church youth serving local communities rather than those that are outside the state, and a youth volunteer day organized by United Way.

Environmental Stewardship

Participants felt that success in environmental stewardship would include reduced energy bills, awareness campaigns about the positive effects of a cleaner environment to the public, and “tracking consumption of reduced utility bills by companies to help families see changes both environmentally and financially.” Potential programming directions include providing subsidies such as energy-efficient light bulbs, educating youth on environmental stewardship, collaborating with faith-based organizations to help conduct environmental outreach in communities, and providing service-learning opportunities via AmeriCorps members or teachers inside schools.

Veterans

Success in the veterans focus area would include reducing the number of homeless veterans, increasing the number of employed veterans, and increasing the number of veterans that are involved in community service and education. Participants suggested fresh programming directions that include bringing the Wounded Warrior program to Augusta, having mentoring programs, providing more employment opportunities, and piloting a program that uses veterans to address disaster relief.

Disaster Services

Success would include having the volunteer response time reduced, funding “real evaluation efforts,” and increasing the “number of volunteer connector opportunities that are included with on-going service opportunities.” Partici-

pants also felt that increasing the number of available volunteers is a measure of success, specifically those who engage long-term with disaster relief.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Detroit, Michigan on August 25.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Success in the education focus area would include an increase in high school and college graduation rates, students having a better understanding of what service means because it is incorporated into the curriculum in public schools, and the fostering of a “service minded” generation. Participants suggested that fresh approaches in programming directions could include providing “mentors/counselors sessions in public schools that will focus on behavioral issues rather than academic [issues],” creating an early warning sign detection program to enable dropout prevention, allowing unemployed or underemployed people to serve in schools while seeking training or

employment, and providing more funding for capacity building.

Healthy Futures

Participants in Detroit believe that success in the healthy futures focus area would include a measurable reduction in childhood obesity rates as a result of service efforts. Success would also include a measurable improvement in health among seniors and increased access to care, as well as raising the physical activity rate and lowering the BMI of elementary students. Fresh approaches to solving problems could include the use of medical clinics, urban agriculture, training that allows flexibility for volunteer service, and better interaction of key components of the health care system, such as primary care, public health care, hospitals, and emergency care. One participant suggested that another potential programming approach could be to “develop a group of individuals who currently live in a healthy lifestyle who can mentor citizens who may be struggling with obesity or wellness.”

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would include community development that is collaborative from the ground up. Participants also felt that success would include having safe and dense neighborhoods made up of engaged citizens. After a service program ends, it would be desirable to place service members in jobs

or retain them in the organizations in which they served. Participants suggested a variety of programming directions, including increasing affordable housing, employers effectively training new employees, encouraging entrepreneurs, promoting restorative justice, and making volunteering a requirement for middle and high school graduation. One participant suggested that it would be helpful to have “more companies ‘risk’ coming into the state to provide grass roots jobs for the communities.” disaster situation.

Environmental Stewardship

There were no comments about environmental stewardship.

Veterans

Participants suggested that veterans could become AmeriCorps volunteers and patient advocates.

Disaster Services

Participants felt that success would include community awareness of what to do in case of a disaster, building trust within the community, higher evacuation rates, and fewer necessary interactions between first responders and members of the public. Programming directions that would be a fresh approach to effectively solving problems include “communications to the community via book clubs, non-profits and churches,” providing grant money to the unemployed so they can become first responders, sticking to one simple message to the public, and getting first responders more involved in their communities to improve effectiveness in a

FLINT, MICHIGAN

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Flint, Michigan on August 26.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Participants in Flint felt that an increase in graduation rates and school attendance and a decrease in discipline issues would be examples of successful, demonstrable results. Participants mentioned a desire for adults to attend college, as it “will build self confidence and their children will start to view education as important.” Participants suggested fresh approaches to effectively solve problems that include “second chance school,” educating teen parents on how to parent, reviewing children’s education with parents, more community service programs for youth between grades 6 and 8, and adding more service-learning opportunities in schools.

Healthy Futures

Participants believe success in the healthy futures focus area would include free community-wide screenings on a quarterly basis, seniors being able to obtain medications more easily and make appointments online, and increases in community involvement, exercising, and weight loss. One participant offered the idea to educate “adults in the nutrition field and improved cooking skills. Less fast food runs and healthier hearts. Once one person is taught they can teach the next.” Participants mentioned a wide variety of fresh approaches to effectively solve problems, including easy-to-use informational websites, service-learning opportunities for students of all ages (including seniors), community gardens, and walking clubs. In addition, participants suggested that the “younger population train the seniors on resources available online, technology training.” Other ideas discussed by participants include tracking health-related data, forming partnerships that would support access to care, teaching children about nutrition in after-school programs, and creating a service organization that utilizes entertainers and athletes to teach the public about nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

Opportunity

Success in the opportunity focus area would include partnerships and a shared vision among community organizations, growth within current community organizations, an increase

in housing, and a decrease in unemployment rates. Participants suggested fresh approaches that include asset mapping, helping identify similar partners to join together for potential funding opportunities, building “flexible and coordinated support systems for people in the community that our organizations serve,” and educating businesses about working with returning citizens and long time unemployed citizens. Participants also called for “community celebrations to reach out to the vets and acknowledge them.”

Environmental Stewardship

Participants felt that success in the environmental stewardship focus area would include metrics such as the number of acres restored, population increases among wildlife, and improvement of water quality. One participant suggested that a programming approach would involve the “control of invasive exotic species.”

Veterans

Success in the veterans focus area would include greater veteran involvement with community-based projects, assistance with transitioning to college, and recognizing veterans as leaders. Fresh approaches to capacity building and problem solving related to veterans include the promotion of “veteran entrepreneur opportunities,” more civilians helping returning veterans adjust in the community, more campus veterans centers, more programs where veterans can help young people and citizens in need, and the celebration of veterans more often within the community.

Disaster Services

There were no comments about disaster services.

MONTANA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Montana on August 26.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Success in the education focus area would include both quantitative and qualitative measures of student improvement. Examples of these include quantitative measures of student grade-level performance and qualitative assessments of student portfolios from service-learning projects. Success would also include more mentoring for students, greater family involvement in education, and better incorporation of service-learning in the curriculum. Participants also noted a desire to see additional populations engaged in service related to education, include community partners, low-income families, the unemployed, homeless youth, the private sector, and high school

guidance counselors.

Healthy Futures

Participants felt that success in healthy futures would include an increase in physical activity programming and recreational resources such as walking trails. In addition, students would have greater access to safe walking routes to school and more nutritious school lunches. Success would also be measured by more people utilizing existing prevention programs and more children enrolled in government-sponsored health insurance programs. Participants also noted that success would include an increase in volunteers related to the healthy futures area, as well as a greater diversity of populations engaged in service. Among those populations that participants suggested should be more engaged in service include Native Americans and other minority groups, seniors, home-schooled youth, Generation X, rural residents, the middle class, and healthcare professionals. Strategies for encouraging healthy futures could include smart growth planning of communities, interconnected transportation systems, workplace wellness programs, and initiatives to increase access to healthy foods.

Opportunity

Montana participants cited several components of success in the opportunity focus area, especially increases in the quantity and quality of partnerships and collaborative efforts

employed. Success would also be measured by increases in professional development programs and increased skills and positive work habits gained through workforce development programs. Success would also include flexibility for rural communities to connect their local needs to federal priorities. Libraries should be utilized to connect citizens with job opportunities. To encourage community engagement, efforts should be made to incorporate a range of groups in service related to opportunity, including low-income individuals, Native Americans, students, business owners, retired business people, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

Environmental Stewardship

Participants felt that success in the environmental stewardship focus area would include clear metrics by which to measure reduced energy consumption and/or carbon reduction. Such metrics would be standardized and thus able to be compared over time and regions. Success would also include the incorporation of youth, Native Americans, and rural communities in environmental service programs. Low-income populations should be both recipients and providers of service, and they could participate in education and training programs that both help promote residential energy conservation and prepare workers for green jobs. Success would also involve the inclusion of private sector groups in service, especially those with an expressed interest in environmental work.

Veterans

For participants in the Montana dialogue, success in the veterans focus area would include better systems in place to connect veterans to service opportunities, either those directed toward helping veterans or those in which veterans themselves can take part. Participants noted that veterans are often unwilling to seek out help or may not know what services and volunteer opportunities are available. Success would thus involve direct communication to veterans about service, perhaps through public relations specialists or a liaison working jointly with the Corporation and the military. Similarly, participants noted that success would include nonprofits being better able to navigate the military hierarchy in order to reach veterans with services or service opportunities. In addition, local National Guard members could be utilized to help conduct outreach to veterans about local service opportunities.

Disaster Services

Participants suggested that success in the disaster services focus area would mean fewer 911 calls during disasters and quicker community recoveries from disasters. Success could be measured by the range of volunteer outreach efforts related to disaster preparedness and the extent and reach of awareness campaigns to educate communities on preparedness. Also critical to success is training and education of those engaged in disaster-related service and collaboration among relevant disaster response agencies. To better prepare communities for disasters and disaster response efforts, service

should engage students, the elderly, low-income citizens, and those with special needs or disabilities.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 27.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Participants felt that success in education would include better educational environments in schools, better test results, greater non-traditional education offerings, and greater trade school and GED completion. Innovative programming, such as Teach for America, would be grown through funding and support. Success would also include the involvement of more populations in service, such as community and business groups, low-income urban community members, parents, and youth who are both in and out of school.

Healthy Futures

Success in healthy futures would include the incorporation of diverse populations in service, including Vietnamese and Hispanic populations. These populations would be engaged by way of face-to-face and media outreach, encouraging their greater participation in projects as staff members, supporters, and/or advisors.

Opportunity

There were no comments about opportunity.

Environmental Stewardship

There were no comments about environmental stewardship.

Veterans

Participants felt that success in the veterans area would include service encouraging the reintegration of veterans into their communities. Service opportunities for veterans should take into account their well-established discipline and skills and should capitalize on their evident willingness to serve. Special efforts should be made to connect with homeless veterans, understand their needs, and connect them with service.

Disaster Services

Success in the disaster services focus area would mean that communities are better prepared to respond to disasters through better communication and evacuation plans. In addi-

tion, low-income families would be engaged in service related to disaster preparedness. Participants also expressed the need for short term, local disaster response corps who would receive stipends and education awards in return for participating in community rebuilding. Success would also include gathering feedback from community members as to what their needs and concerns are. Finally, success would include more local employment which would better provide citizens with the resources needed to respond to disasters.

TOPEKA, KANSAS

Below is a summary of the comments from the dialogue held in Topeka, Kansas on August 30.

THEMES RELATED TO WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE, AS WELL AS FRESH APPROACHES THAT EMPOWER AND BUILD CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY SOLVE PROBLEMS

Education

Participants felt that success in the education focus area would include engaging low-income, senior, and disabled populations in service, and connecting CNCS service members with schools to serve as student mentors. Success would also include an increased focus on Head Start and preschool students.

Healthy Futures

For many participants, success in healthy futures would mean that communities exhibit greater levels of exercise and activity and citizens enjoy healthier diets. Participants cited goals of reducing obesity in youth and adults and the increased use of gyms, parks,

and trails. In addition, more children would bike or walk to school, and schools would offer healthier food choices for students. Communities would also have increased access to fresh produce, and more families would cook meals at home rather than eating out. Participants also noted opportunities to incorporate diverse populations in service related to healthy futures; among these are youth, seniors, veterans, professional chefs, healthcare professionals, stay-at-home mothers, and dance and exercise instructors. Strategies for encouraging positive healthy futures outcomes include nutrition education, cooking classes, collaboration with schools, recreation centers, and senior centers, and programming and incentives to encourage exercising.

Opportunity

Topeka participants noted several ways success could be measured in the opportunity focus area. Among these are more employment opportunities, less reliance on government support, fewer unemployment claims, and a decrease in economic hardship among diverse population groups. Success would also include increased affordable housing, greater financial stability, and better saving rates. Participants expressed a desire to engage diverse populations in service related to opportunity, including immigrants, veterans, low-income community members, those with poor credit, prisoners and ex-prisoners, students, and financial indus-

try employees. Participants noted opportunities to offer mentoring and education to encourage financial literacy in communities, as well as opportunities to connect service and workforce development strategies.

efforts to conduct community preparedness assessments, offer trainings, and educate the public.

Environmental Stewardship

There were no comments about environmental stewardship.

Veterans

Success in the veterans focus area would include veterans feeling less isolated and more acclimated to their communities. Veterans would be connected to a network of other veterans who could provide peer mentoring and support. Veterans serving veterans could also be used to help connect returning soldiers with employment opportunities, and to mentor them in their new careers. Finally, success would include fostering patriotism in the younger generation.

Disaster Services

Participants felt that success would mean that a community has a greater number of people directly engaged with disaster response teams, a response plan is in place, and more people know who to call in the event of a disaster. Participants noted the need to engage both middle class and low-income populations in disaster preparedness, as well as the business community and government officials. Also seen as critical to success is collaboration among, and communication between, various organizations involved in service, along with

WEBINAR: TRIBAL LEADERS

A webinar was held with Tribal leaders on August 23. Below is a summary of participants' reactions and comments. Participants were not asked about the six specific focus areas; rather, they were asked about how they can inform the Corporation on critical community issues, fresh approaches to capacity building and problem solving, and important issues in their communities.

THEMES RELATED TO HOW TRIBAL LEADERS CAN INFORM THE CORPORATION ON CRITICAL ISSUES AFFECTING THEIR COMMUNITIES

Participants expressed a desire to see an awareness campaign and greater visibility by the Corporation in their communities. This could be achieved through youth groups and Tribal colleges, in addition to traditional means of connection such as through Tribal government. Participants also see importance in collaborating with other service providers in Tribal communities and maintaining greater continuity of programming over time once it is established. Finally, participants want to see programming unique to Tribal communities rather than the implementation of cookie-cutter approaches.

THEMES RELATED TO FRESH APPROACHES TO CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Participants noted that fresh approaches could include cultural programming and opportunities for collaboration between community youth and elders. Successful programming that already exists and could be replicated includes youth sports programming that also involves participants in youth development and civic engagement activities.

THEMES RELATED TO IMPORTANT ISSUES IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Participants noted the importance of Tribal communities building their capacity to foster economic development, and the necessity of effective policies, standards, and technical assistance to do so. Participants also feel that it is important to connect Corporation service programming to existing local Tribal programs in order to enhance collaboration and extend the reach of service.